TORIES OF THE HILLS

WESLEY SYLVESTER THOMPSON

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By

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DEDICATED

TO

HIS DAUGHTERS

ANNIE LAURA and MARY ALICE

FOREWORD

This book, by Mr. W. S. Thompson, is concerned with the strife in the hills of north Alabama during the War Between the States. It is a historical novel that is both interesting and informative. It follows closely the tragical pattern of life during the war in the section described. It is based on painstaking research and is definitely more factual than fictional. The fiction parts conform admirably to historical perspective and are, therefore, persuasively plausible. More often than not, the names of persons discussed are the real names of active participants in events described.

Mr. Thompson has made a contribution to Alabama history by investing the bones of known conflicts with flesh and blood, by revelation of new incidents of conflict, and with his discussions of leaders in both contesting factions, particularly that of the great Tory leader, Christopher C. Sheets.

The delightful love romance between Bill Walker and Cherry Parker illustrates the forbearance of love amidst class barriers and flames of war passions. The final triumph of these two young persons symbolizes the eventful reunion of neighbors and communities under the impact of the forces of an innate spirit of forgiveness and consciousness of mutual self-interest.

Tories of the Hills is a story well worth reading by all those interested in piquant incidents and who seek a better understanding of the position of the hill folk of Alabama in the War Between the States.

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INTRODUCTION

During the Revolutionary War those in America who wanted to remain loyal to England were called TORIES. Likewise, those in the Secession Convention, in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1861 who opposed the Bill of Secession, were stigmatized. It was suggested that; for those who opposed the State after it was free and independent, or hindered its work in any way, they would revive the nomenclature of 1776 and apply the name TORIES to them and that they should be dealt with as TRAITORS to the State.

Because most of those opposed to the Secession were from the hill sections of the State, they were called TORIES OF THE HILLS, or Tories from the hills. In carrying on their opposition to the Secession, these people from several counties met in a Convention July 4, 1861, and drew up resolutions to secede from the State. When this had failed these people took to the coves and mountains for hiding rather than go to the Confederate Armies. Then, when the Confederacy and people of that section organized the Home-Guards and Partisan-Rangers to hunt them down and make them go, there followed one of the bloodiest struggles of guerrilla-warfare ever fought on American soil.

The author has spent more than twelve years in travel and study in preparation for this story. He lays claims to having seen and talked with more persons who were over 100 years old than any man living. It is with regrets that

he is not able to give due credit to all those who have given him these stories and in other ways assisted in the confirmation and preparation of the same. But the list would be entirely too long to be practicable.

Perhaps the only lesson to be gained from a reading of this account is; That there is in this world no struggle that is so intense and severe as that of civil strife; That a man has no enemies so vicious and avowed as those of his own country and among those of his own acquaintance and kin, in civil strife.

It is hoped that despite all the atrocities and cruel events here related; That the reader will feel rewarded for his efforts and may have a wholesome taste restored in the end.

The Author

TORIES OF THE HILLS

Chapter I

"A BLACK REPUBLICAN ELECTED"

Charles Christopher Sheets, known as just plain "Chris," to the people of Winston County, Alabama, was up early — a few minutes before four o'clock. He had intended leaving home that morning without awakening his Ma and Pa, but in this he failed. As soon as his father, William, heard the rustle of his son's heavy shoes he leaped from bed and began building a fire in the great rock fireplace.

"Oh, Ma!" he called to his wife, "hadn't ye better git up an' fix the boy a bite to eat? He's set to go summers this mornin'!"

Mary, his wife, turned in bed just in time to see, by the light in the fireplace, her son hurrying through the room and out the door without saying a word. William watched the boy closely as he passed and could see the boy was disturbed about something — but what? He went to the window and unlatched the wooden shutter and peered out after the boy to see in which direction he was heading.

He turned finally to his wife and commented sadly: "Ma, it 'pears to me that that boy, Chris, uv ourn, is a gittin' his self powful bothered bout sumpin here lately. Wy, he jest ain't been actin' his self round here. Did you

see that dratted look he went off from here a wearin' on 'is face, fore we could git him one bite uv breakfast?"

He pushed the window shut. Chris was already out of sight in the darkness.

"I reckon I kin tell ye jest what Chris is bothered about, if'n ye ax me," William's wife declared sagely. She sat up on the side of her high poster, corded bed and began pulling on her red wool home-knit stockings. "Chris is plain bothered bout this 'lection and this country a gonna git in war bout these niggers!"

William shook his head as he answered. "Well, I don't see no need in Chris a gittin' his self worked up sich a sight over that. If hit's gonna come it'll jest hafto come. Thar ain't nothin' he can do about it."

It was Saturday, November 10th, 1860 — four days after the presidential election. Chris was on his way to Houston, the County Seat of Winston. He knew that someone would be bringing the news of the election there that day — that there would be a crowd there discussing the election; they would be wanting to know if a "Black Republican" had been elected. And he wanted to know, too.

This election had worried Chris for a long time. He had tried hard to conceal his anxiety about it. He knew at the same time that he was not able to suppress his feelings any longer; that the burden of his heart was becoming conspicuous to his people, that the children of "Sardis", the little Country School, could see a change in him. Despite the fact he had tried to force himself to, he could no longer romp and play with them at "dinner" and "recess," as he had been accustomed to. He felt quite grown-up and interested in the affairs of the country — not just "kid stuff" any longer. He wanted to read the new books,

newspaper articles — to find out more about the institution of Slavery, and spent most of his time doing just that.

Chris was young — not quite twenty-two, studious and thorough in whatever he undertook. His great desire now was to understand and present the truth about Slavery and the Abolition and Secession movement and this had motivated him to study and gain a far broader knowledge of the problems affecting the country than most of those about him. His associates had, for a time, recognized in him the possibility of a leader and were already looking to him for advice in the economical and political questions of his country. Although he had shown no political aspirations, many persons in his section were already soliciting his candidacy for public office. They liked his earnestness and disposition to try to correct the problems confronting them.

It was a cold day and the youth turned his coat collar up around his neck and buttoned it to keep out the chill of early morning. The first killing frost and freeze of the fall greeted him. As the light of day appeared, he saw everything covered with frost and icicles spewed from the rocks in the ground. He walked at a brisk pace. He had to in order to keep from freezing; besides, it was nearly twelve miles to Houston and it would take him a long time to walk it. As he hurried along the road, his thoughts turned again to the big crowd he was sure to see in town that day. They would be sure to be talking of Secession if "Black Abe" was elected. That seemed foolish to him. He couldn't understand their ideas of rebellion.

As the long rays of the sun splashed through the forest, they almost blinded him. He had already come a good five miles. His ears and nose were cold. He would soon be

getting warm now. He tried to walk a bit faster. At the same time he felt a spirit of repulsion surge through his body, a stubborn aversion to his going any farther. It was not a spirit of malice or hatred toward anyone but a recurring of self-consciousness as he neared Jim Downey's place. Jim was a violent Secessionist and the harsh things he had said about those who opposed Slavery or Secession had almost caused Chris to cut himself away from the Public in general.

"Jim's a good man at heart, though," Chris mused. "Only he is a small slave owner — and so I suppose that marked him as one in his section to get a lot of special attention and favors from the Secession advocates."

He figured that Jim would be going to Houston that day — on horseback. If he were lucky, they might even invite him, Chris, to ride one of their horses. He was tempted to stop at Jim's for this reason; then his thoughts turned to what Jim had said a few days before about "That young Tory school-teacher ain't fit to live in the country, much less teach the children," and he started to turn from the road and go through the woods to avoid the house. He turned to stoop under some low-hanging limbs well out over the road. As he did so he felt the crack of a sheet of ice in a rut-hole. He grabbed with his hands to get his balance, and as he did this, he felt his foot sink to the bottom of the hole of icy water. His shoe filled, his sock grew soggy about the ankle.

Then the barking of Downey's hound dog caused him to realize that he was much nearer the house than he had supposed. On seeing the house only a short way off, he turned to dart into the woods. A mass of wild grapevines along the roadside presented an impenetrable obstacle.

He hurried on past the house as fast as he could. The smoke from Downey's chimney indicated that he had but recently started a fire and that he was not yet ready to be out of his house. Chris was glad that he had been able to pass without any disturbance other than the hoarse barking of the lazy old hound. By this time he could feel the ice in his sock about his shoe top. He realized his only relief would be to stop and pull off his wet sock. This he did almost automatically as his thoughts turned again to those he expected to see at the County Seat.

There would be Dr. Kaiser, the big, portly old man who lived in Brown's Creek Bottom. It was a long way, but he was bound to be there. Dr. Kaiser was one man who seldom if ever allowed an opportunity for carrying his point to pass. He would be sure to be there, lashing scathing denunciations upon those who had opposed him in the election. If his side had won, he would be hurling his sharp barbs of triumphal victory; if his side had lost he would be levying bitter tirades upon the opposition for lack of better judgment.

There would also be Uncle Dick Payne giving his opinion on the election and invariably assuring everyone that the election had gone exactly as he had "suspected."

Jim Downey, he hoped, would not be there. Jim had been so caustic, so bitter in his opposition to anything suggested. He had seemed completely blinded to any sound judgment. He would not even want the other fellow to live who had any opposition to his slaves.

Chris knew that the people would be coming into Houston early this cold, clear November day. The little town would no doubt already be filled when he reached it. He knew, too, that those coming would be interested in one thing. Their thoughts and discussions would be focused

upon one subject — that they would want to know if Lincoln, "The Black Republican," had been elected.

Chris knew that there were many like himself to whom the outcome of the election had already become a cause of dread. It was an election which had been characterized by interest and intrigue never before known to the "Hills people" of North Alabama. An election which he feared would involve the people of the Nation in turmoil and strife greater than any they had ever known and from which the people would need hundreds of years to recover.

Finally Chris reached the town a bit behind Jim Downey, who rode in ahead of him, while Chris walked.

Chris made his way to a group of excitedly talking men and they turned to greet him.

"Howdy Chris! Howdy Chris!" they shouted, glad to see him.

"Well?" asked Chris impatiently, "What's the news?"

"Well, we've got a bad thing looks like, Chris," spoke Tom Pink Curtis gloomily. "Lincoln is elected. Looks like we are in for Secession."

"And we're not going to waste any time about it!" came the emphatic words of Kaiser.

Chris said nothing. He slumped tired and exhausted on the end of the porch and listened to the excited conversation going on about him. After a time Jim Downey came from the back of the courthouse, where he had hitched his horse. Sam Noles came around the house with him. He had already informed him of the election.

Suddenly someone cried, "How about a speech, Chris?" It was Jiles Addison. Knowing how much Chris had been studying on the news of late, he felt sure Chris would have something important to tell the crowd.

Chris hesitated. He knew that excitement was at fever heat.

"Hooraw for Chris Sheets! Let's have a speech!" chimed in Jerry Burns, however.

Then Jim Downey interrupted bitterly, "We'll have no speech making by this young upstart. If anybody speaks it'll be somebody in sympathy with our South!"

Chris flushed angrily but held his temper.

"Jim Downey!" said a calm voice, and Peter Ingle, a strong, large young fellow, who was Justice of the Peace, laid a strong, firm hand on Jim's shoulder. "You sit down, Jim," he ordered. "Leave that young man be. If ye lay your hand on him I'll bash yer brains out in front of this crowd."

A new feeling of tenseness swept over the crowd.

"Let's go, Jim," Dr. Kaiser urged as he left the crowd, leading his horse behind the courthouse, and Jim Downey followed him.

The tension lightened.

"Tell us what you think about the situation, Chris," Tom Pink Curtis requested, after Kaiser and Downey were gone.

"You mean about the Secession?" Chris asked.

"That's it! Are we likely to have a Secession Convention in Alabama?" Curtis asked.

Chris warmed to his subject. "As sure as you live," he declared, and then, as he began talking the entire crowd gathered anxiously to hear what he had to say. "That was settled last winter, in February," he went on, "when the joint assembly of the Legislature passed a resolution advising Governor A. B. Moore that in the event of the nomination of Stephen A. Douglas by the Democrats or

the election of a Black Republican, he was to call an election for representatives to a State Secession Convention. I am sure that William Lowndes Yancey and his group are already in Montgomery persuading the governor to call the Convention."

"They'll be tellin' a different tale about this thing fore they git started," allowed Alf Tittle. "This idea uv tharn that they'll scare the daylights outa the whole country is a lotta bosh. Why, they'll not git to fighting fore they'll be a wantin' us to go and do thar fightin fer em."

Chris Sheets continued, "There is no reason why our country should be so dangerously divided and its people so indignant except for the lack of wisdom and judgment of a few rabid Secessonists in the South. You old people here today, who have lived here all your lives, know that never before have the slave owners of the big plantations been so much concerned about the hill people. This is the first time in the history of our State that most of you have even known when they had an election and you would not have known this time if it had not been for old Will Yancey and Henry Hilliard and a few more who went or sent their speakers throughout the State, preaching disunion and Secession, for the last three months. Many of you old men have never heard of a political speech before in your lives till these men wanted your vote to cause Secession. If old Yancey had not bolted the Convention at Charleston and had let us gone and voted the Democratic ticket, we would not be here today talking about Secession as we are."

"That's right, men!" agreed Tom Pink Curtis. "Chris is shore right about it. This is the first time in our State that the people of this county have ever heard a speech

for a National Candidate. They would not have this time if it had not been for the Secessionists. Besides, this is the first time in our history that the people of this section have ever voted any other way but as Jacksonian and Jeffersonian Democrats. They would not have voted any other way this time if they had had electors on the ticket."

"Well, what'll we do about it, men?" Bird Potts wanted to know.

The eyes of the crowd turned again toward Chris Sheets. They wanted to hear his advice on the matter.

"What do you say, Chris? We all want to know what ye say?" Jerry Burns urged.

"We can't exactly tell yet," Chris began cautiously. "It may be best to wait and see what steps are taken by our State first. The thing we had better do, if the Governor calls an election for delegates to the Secession Convention — we had better get the people here and in the other hill counties of the State to elect delegates who are opposed to Secession, and let them go down there and vote Secession down. Maybe we can prevent it that way."

"Hoorah for Chris! That's right! That's what we'll shore do!" the crowd responded sensibly.

"Chris, do you reckon that this election will really tear our country up?" Howard Bates asked him with a worried look on his face.

"The election won't," Sheets answered. "That is if the election was all there was to it. But it is the attitude of these Southern leaders that is going to tear it up. Their groundwork is already laid. They are determined to secede. That is what will tear the country all to pieces. Take for instance they have already succeeded in splitting the biggest denominations in the country. The Methodist and Baptist and Presbyterians have already divided as you

know, and now they are going to divide the Southern states from the Union."

"Chris, who do you say we should 'lect if'n they vote for a man to that Vention?" It was Jiles Addison who asked.

"I say we will elect Chris Sheets! That's who we'll elect!" responded Alf Tittle.

So the excited talk continued throughout the day, with a group leaving now and then for their homes and new ones coming in.

The following day the people went to Church, largely to continue their discussions of the election and the possibilities of Secession. Many of them assembled in the Church yards where they spent the day without entering the buildings to engage in the religious services.

Many of the more devout and faithful spent hours in earnest discussion, engrossed in the results of the election. Most of the preachers were members of the religious bodies that had separated from their Northern Brethren and took the opportunity to urge their laity to follow them and imitate the actions of the Israelites, under the leadership of Moses, to throw off their yoke of bondage and come out from under the yoke of Republican tyranny.

Chris hung around quite a bit, joining in the conversation often; often just standing and listening. Often, he was called upon to give his views on the topic of conversation uppermost in the minds of all.

"What we want," urged Tom Pink Curtis and the other leaders who were opposed to Secession, "is to be left alone, as we have been in the past. We are not opposed to the slaves or the institution — what we are op-

posed to, though, is the strife and dissension that is sure to come into our section and our homes because of their agitation."

Chris nodded in complete agreement.

Chapter II

THE SECESSION

Plans were being made fast in those days — the air fairly hummed with it. Tempers were on edge — trouble crackled in the air.

On Tuesday, November the 19th, a group of those Southerners opposing the Secession movement met at Houston to work out some plans of opposing the Secession and to select someone to represent Winston County in the event of a Secession Convention which seemed quite likely.

Judge Oran Davis had spent the night in Houston in order to be present for the meeting. He had little more than opened the door to the courthouse when Alex Underwood, of Marion County, arrived with Tom Pink Curtis.

"Howdy, men," Davis cried. "You must have spent the night with Pink to be over here this early, Alex?"

"I did. Came that far last night," the other replied. "I wanted to be sure to be here today and I didn't know what the weather would be like this morning, so I rode over yesterday."

"It's good you've come, Alex," returned Judge Davis. "I reckon you didn't bring any news from the family? I haven't been home since Sunday after the election, you know."

"None as I have heard of," Alex admitted. "Looks to me like everybody in Marion County and the West side

of Winston are too upset about the election and clamor for Secession to be concerned about their own families."

"Sure looks like we have got a tremendous job on our hands, don't it?" Judge Davis turned and looked at Tom Pink Curtis.

"That is sure a fact," agreed Curtis. "We had just as well set in preparing for it because them hot-headed Secessionists of South Alabama are not going to stop short of tearing this State away from the Union."

"Wonder what they have done about it?" Underwood wanted to know.

"I guess we'll learn about that when Chris Sheets gets here, if he comes," Davis allowed. "Chris takes a paper from Jasper and he has kept up with every bit that's been published, I bound you."

"That's right," Curtis agreed as he kicked a chunk of fire which had rolled down on the hearth. "That is the smartest boy in Winston County!"

"Why, he's got more sense than half the others in the whole county," was Davis' appraisal.

By this time several others began arriving. Among them were — Jiles Addison, Alf Tittle, Bird Potts, Jack Walker, Wiley Dodd, and several others still later.

And finally, the door opened and in walked Chris Sheets himself, and Anderson Ward.

"Howdy, Chris! Howdy!" the men called greetings.

"We've been hoping you'd bring us some news of the actions of them agitators," Judge Davis said hopefully.

"Well, it looks like they have done plenty." Chris seemed anxious to tell what he knew. He was pulling his paper from his pocket. "This here paper is filled with their work," he went on. "There is a bunch of men that has already been to see the governor, trying to persuade

him to call the election for delegates to a Secession Convention." He held up the paper to show his listeners the headlines.

"Is he going to do it?" Walker asked excitedly as though he were surprised that the governor would think of such a thing.

"Sure he is," Sheets said emphatically. "Here it says that a committee of twenty-one men from seven counties of the southern and central part of the State met in Montgomery to petition the governor to call for the election of delegates to a convention in Montgomery for the purpose of voting on Secession.

"Then, here it says, on November 12th — they wrote the governor a letter demanding that he carry out the resolution of the last General Assembly of the State Legislature in calling the election of Secession Representatives. On down, it says the governor replied that the election would not be official until they met in Washington and cast their votes. However, he has no doubt as to the outcome of the election and intends to issue a proclamation authorizing the election to be held soon."

"Well, that should settle it, fellows," Tom Pink Curtis said advisedly. "If the governor wanted to do anything else, Old Yancey, Brooks and Watts wouldn't let him.

"I'd say there is no use to waste any time, men, in making preparation for a man to represent us."

The crowd of men nodded in approval of Alex Underwood's words. "That's what we want in Marion County," said one.

"And I say, we'll nominate Chris Sheets!" Jerry Burns suggested loudly.

The others all seemed to be of the same opinion. "Hoorah for Chris! He's the man!" cheered Alf Tittle.

Judge Oran Davis arose from his chair then and spoke. "Gentlemen," he said solemnly, "I believe that first of all we should consult with Chris and see if he wants to represent us or is willing and able to do so. Because, as I see it, this is a task involving grave responsibility. There is going to be many a hard battle to fight in this thing before it's all over."

Curtis turned to Chris, his eyes glowing excitedly. "Chris, will you allow us to put your name before the people of the County?" he asked.

Chris, unassuming, said, "Of course — if you wish, but, don't you think you could find someone else better qualified and with more experience?"

Judge Oran Davis shook his head, as did the others. "We feel that because of your schooling and wide study on the institution of Slavery, you are better prepared to represent us and present our cause than any other person in the county. That's my frank belief, and I know it is also that of all the rest here."

"Well," conceded Chris, "I'll be willing to do anything I can to keep our State from seceding and our country out of war. So, if you really want me, I'll accept."

"Good!" shouted Wiley Dodd. "Now we can start work a'tellin' the folks who our man is. We'll shore elect Chris Sheets to that convention."

"I'd say we've done a good piece of work here today. Let's get out from here and get busy," Bird Potts suggested.

The group began leaving, heartened by the decision and ready to start work for the election.

* * *

On December 6th, 1860, Governor A. B. Moore issued

a Proclamation, setting December 24th aside as the day for the election. The Secessionists had chosen Dr. Andrew Kaiser as their candidate to represent Winston County in the Convention, which was to meet in Montgomery, January 7th, 1861.

During the few days between this proclamation and the date of the election, the Secessionists sent their speakers into every county in the State. The campaign was bitter and hard and characterized by tirades and personalities on both sides.

All those opposing Secession were ridiculed and abused as "TORIES" and unfit for the land in which they lived. In return, the Secessionists were stigmatized as Fire-Eaters and Rebels, because of the fiery zeal with which they heaped their scathing rebukes upon their opponents.

The issue in selecting the delegates for the Convention was presented in summary by Chris Sheets at Houston on Saturday, November 30th. He said:

"Gentlemen, we are about to cast our vote in this county for one to represent the people of Winston County in a Secession Convention to meet in Montgomery, January 7th of next year. In doing this we want to get someone who will represent all the people instead of just the slave owners and politicians of the State.

"The general problem confronting this country is no longer Slavery or slaves. It has become an issue of Secession. William Lowndes Yancey is the prime determiner of it all. He has been in retirement for a long time, but was glad to come back at the request of the slave owners and politicians in order to become the champion of their cause. Today he is looked upon as the 'Guardian Angel' of the 'Southern Rights.'

"He was chosen last December as a delegate to the Democratic Convention in Charleston, South Carolina. Many persons were afraid then that he would be sure to distract the people of the South from their peaceful intentions and finally provoke a war.

"He and Tombs of Georgia and Calhoun of South Carolina have repeatedly said that they intended to make Slavery the issue in the presidential election of this year if it took the reopening of African Slave Trade, long abolished and outlawed, as a means of bringing the issue to the fore.

"In order to carry out his designs he had the resolution passed by the joint session of Legislature last February 24th, authorizing Governor Moore, that in the event of the Nomination of the 'Little Giant,' Stephen A. Douglas, on the Democratic ticket, or the election of Abraham Lincoln, 'The Black Republican,' he was to call the legislature together, or call for the election of Delegates to a Secession Convention.

"In addition to this, these Southern leaders, on April 23rd, of last year at Charleston, introduced a resolution into the platform of the Democratic Party, demanding the right of the slave owners in their respective states and guaranteeing their protection in passing with their Negroes through the free states and territories. Yancey declared that unless this resolution should be adopted, the delegates of the Southern States would bolt the Convention, which would in turn result in the election of a 'Black Republican' and in this event the Southern States would secede from the Union.

"Because of the Convention's failure to adopt this resolution, Yancey made one of the fiercest orations ever

made and led the bolt of the Southern delegates.

"Four days later these delegates in the same city held a convention and nominated Breckenridge, a violent Secessionist of Kentucky as their candidate.

"Gentlemen — you know that we, here, in this section have followed in the cherished footsteps of our fathers in voting the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Democratic ticket. We would have done so this time if we could. And now, even though a large majority of those in the State have voted for Breckenridge, the people of this section have voted overwhelmingly for Bell and Douglas.

"Now we must prepare ourselves through our choice of representatives to prevent ourselves from being torn from the Union which will invariably lead to a Civil War. These men are not interested in Democracy but Secession."

There was good common sense in what Chris said and all who listened to him realized that — and were more positive than ever that in picking him they had picked the right man to represent them.

* * *

Although Dr. Kaiser put up quite a struggle in the election, Chris won over him by a vote of almost four to one.

Even before the meeting of the delegates in Montgomery, things were rapidly moving toward an armed conflict. Those who had been elected to the Convention, who favored cooperation with the Federal Government, together with their supporters, were being harassed and condemned as "traitors" and unfit to live in the State.

The day finally came to leave for the Convention.

Judge Oran Davis and Alex Underwood had final

words of advice to give the delegates as they prepared to leave Thorn Hill Station. Two men by the names of Allen and Steadham were to go with Chris as delegates from Marion County to Montgomery.

"I tell you, men," said Judge Davis, "you've really got a job ahead of you."

"We realize that," conceded Steadham.

"It will be about like lambs going into a pack of wolves," admitted Allen.

"But you men remember this," put in Underwood, "you were elected by good, loyal Jacksonian and Jeffersonian Democrats to represent them in the Convention. We who voted for you are against Secession and we want you to go to Montgomery and vote against it first, last and always."

"Yon can depend on me for that," assured Chris.

* * *

Before the delegates met in the Capital, both sides were claiming a majority of representatives. The city of Montgomery had planned a noble reception for those favoring Secession. Nothing but contempt and harassment was held for those who did not come to vote for Secession.

When Chris and his two companions reached the capital city, they found things a hundred times worse than they had ever dreamed they would be. The reports in the newspapers, which were given them were sufficient to lead one to believe that the State had already seceded. They all told in bold headlines of Governor A. B. Moore's orders to Colonel J. B. Todd, Commander of the First Volunteer Regiment of Alabama Soldiers, to seize the Forts, Morgan and Gaines, near Mobile and to take the arsenal at Mt. Vernon before they could be reenforced by the

Federals. These orders had already been carried out by Todd on January 4th, without the firing of a single gun.

It was a warm night for January, as Allen, Steadham and Chris Sheets walked from their hotel along the city streets that night of January 6th, 1861. They talked as they walked.

"These South Alabamians sure owe a lot to the slaves of this country," observed Steadham.

"I was thinking of that as we came along through Chilton and Autagua Counties on our way down here," came Chris' comment. "You know, we who live in the hills of Alabama don't have the things like we have seen on our trip."

"Why, there are plenty of plantations here in this section where one man owns more slaves than there are in the entire hills of north Alabama," declared Allen. "I can't say as I blame them for their interest in defending their slaves against abolition."

"But the thing that is so repulsive to me —" Chris turned to spit on the ground, "is the way they have gone about it. They are acting as though Abraham Lincoln has done freed the slaves and driven them off their plantations. They are acting as though the Federal Government has already started coercing them and making them leave the Union."

They paused as they saw in front of a stately home, a carriage drawn by a huge span of bay horses. The driver, a Negro, was in full dress, silk hat, long coat and gloves. He waited patiently, looking down at them until the three came on and were almost even with the carriage. Their attention was then distracted by a lovely belle in full evening dress, bedecked with countless pearls and

rings, who came from the house to the carriage. The grace with which she tripped down the brick-paved walk to the road fascinated all three men. They had to check their progress to keep from coming right into her path as she came along. To their astonishment and chagrin, she passed them entirely unnoticed and entered her carriage.

"That is another thing they have here, too, that we don't have in the hills," came tritely from Sheets as he flushed indignantly.

His two companions chuckled.

"Lang," Steadham addressed Allen on his left, "we will have to watch Chris while he is down here. These belles will be finding out that he is not married, you know."

"I should think they would rather prefer their slaves," Chris replied bitterly.

The things the three had seen on their way here the day before and the scenes of the city weighed heavily on the minds of the representatives. Long after all others were in bed and asleep, Chris sat at his window in the hotel and watched the busy avenues. What he had witnessed for the past two days made him wonder.

"Maybe, after all," he thought, "these people here do have a cause."

His own experiences had been limited to the hills. There their homes, society and lives were very simple indeed, compared with the rich luxuries of the plantations. Why, these men of North Alabama who were looked upon as being rich; those who were the biggest slave owners of the hills were poor and modest compared with these of the South. He could realize now that this was not just a tradition they were trying to defend, but to them it was an economy, a heritage. The one thing though, that Chris

could not harmonize, was their attitudes and methods they were using. He could grant them their claims to rights of freedom from oppression of the Federal Government. But at the same time, he reasoned, the people of the hills ought to be granted theirs. This he could see already, the politicians were determined not to do. There was William Yancey — Chris could see how he was already to dominate the Convention. And there was Brooks — ready to do whatever job Yancey had cut out for him.

Chris continued for a long time turning in his mind those things he had already seen and the things he expected on the basis of them. He remembered well the advice of Judge Davis, that they would be up against a problem. It loomed even bigger now than any of the folks back home had dreamed it would be. There was one thought though that kept recurring in his mind — he would not go back on the promises he had made the folks back home. It might take a lot of patience and endurance of hardship on his part. If it did — he was willing to suffer rather than betray the confidence of his people.

* * *

The next day was cold and wet. Dexter Avenue was soggy from the heavy traffic on it. Chris Sheets was again amazed at the willingness of the aristocratic men who braved the weather and the mud to attend the opening of the Convention.

When the time came for the Convention to convene, both sides were still claiming a majority of delegates. After a lot of wrangling over which side would organize the Convention, it was finally decided that each side would nominate a member — and they would both serve as temporary chairmen until the Convention could be organized.

The Secessionists then nominated William Brooks, of Perry County and the Cooperationists nominated Robert Jemison, of Tuscaloosa County. These men took the desk to serve until the votes for chairman could be counted. When the votes were all in and counted, it was found that Brooks had won by a count of 54 to 46.

So the Secessionists then organized the Convention. A committee of thirteen was chosen from members of both sides, to consider resolutions and proposals before they were submitted to the Convention.

William Lowndes Yancey presented to the Convention the first resolution, requesting that some minister of the city be invited each day to open the session with prayer.

The Cooperationists submitted to the committee of 13, a resolution making it mandatory to submit the Ordinance of Secession to a vote of the people.

This the committee refused to submit to the Convention.

"Why will the gentlemen of the Secession not allow our resolution to come before the Convention?" Jeremiah Clements demanded.

"What purpose would it serve? We have come here to decide the issue of Secession!" was the answer.

"This would at least give us people of Alabama a chance to see what action the other Southern States are going to take and whether or not they are willing to act jointly with Alabama after the Secession," Jeremiah answered.

"Every move made by the minority which delays our Secession is an act of condoning the 'Black Republican Administration'," T. J. Russell declared.

"We submit a resolution condemning the administration of Lincoln and Hamlin, but demanding that the

Ordinance of Secession be submitted to a vote of the people of the State. This, because we feel that a majority of the people are opposed to Secession," affirmed Clements.

Yancey took the floor again. Everyone could see that he was at fever pitch.

"This government is a representative type rather than a pure democracy," he declared. "If this ordinance should be passed by but a single vote majority, it would stand. It would represent the wishes of the people of Alabama. All the people of the State will be compelled to abide by and support it. If they won't, then we will revive the nomenclature of Seventy-Six; we'll apply the name 'Tory' to those who oppose the Secession, as those who favored cooperation with England were called during the Revolutionary War. All those who oppose the State of Alabama after she assumes her independence from the Union will become traitors — rebels against its authority, and will be dealt with as such. The misguided, deluded, wicked men in our midst, if any there be who oppose it, will be aligned with the Federal Power and must be dealt with as our enemies!"

This fiery speech came near throwing the Convention into a riot.

"That is the most belligerent speech I have ever heard," remarked Chris Sheets to Lang Allen beside him.

"If there wasn't any cause for war, he would make one," returned Allen.

There were whispers of revolt all over the assembly now.

Then Robert Jemison of Tuscaloosa replied:

"I have never said anything against this being a representative form of government, or of the gentlemen from

South Carolina or the great State from which he comes. I did speak of the telegrams which are being sent here from other States, just at the right time and on the right subjects to influence the vote of the Convention.

"The Gentleman from Montgomery tells us that the nomenclature of the year '76 will be revived. That we will be Tories and Whigs as they were then. He says that if the Ordinance of Secession should pass by but a single vote, all who will not submit to it are guilty of treason and must be punished as traitors.

"For whom, and by what authority does he speak? The gentleman knows that in many parts of the State there is strong opposition to the Ordinance! That it will be opposed by the masses of the people. He knows that many have threatened to resist those who try to force it upon them. Will the gentlemen go into those sections of the State and hang all who are opposed to Secession? Will he hang them by families, by neighborhood, by towns, by counties, by districts? Who, sir, will give the bloody order? Who will be your executioner? Is this the spirit of Southern Chivalry? Are those the sentiments of the boasted champion of Southern Rights? Are those the first fruits of a Southern Republic? Ah! Is this the bloody charity of a party which seeks to deliver our own sunny South from the galling yoke of the abolitionist party?"

Loud murmurs and excited voices now broke out as the representative grew furious. Many of them became raging mad, at the point of bloodshed. And the Secessionists were compelled to possess themselves through fear of provoking war among the members of the Convention that would lead to defeat of a solid front which they hoped to present to the people, and to the other seceding States.

Chris and his companions had little chance to do much just then, but they took everything in with wide open eyes and ears.

On January 11th, the Ordinance was read to the Convention and submitted to a vote at last. The first count showed 54 to 46 for the proposal. Then a clamor was started at once to make the vote unanimous. Finally sixty-one of the delegates signed, and a pressure movement was then begun to force the other thirty-nine to sign.

Chris shook his head sadly as he heard Jeremiah Clements of Madison County say, "I will sign with full knowledge that treason is being committed. I walk with you into the Revolution!" The man spoke calmly and deliberately.

But others were more obdurate.

"I'll never sign it," contended R. S. Watkins, of Franklin County.

"I'll slip off before I'll sign it," agreed Jones of Fayette.

During the evening of January 11th, guns were roaring, flags were flying and bright lights gleamed in almost every window in Montgomery. And during all this time a pressure movement of threats and intimidation was being carried on by the Secessionists.

The following day a counter proposal to the Secession Ordinance was drawn up and submitted to the 21 minority members who had refused to sign the Ordinance. Nineteen of these were finally induced to sign this as a means of disclaiming any responsibilities for the Secession and asking that the Federal Government not hold them liable for the consequences of Secession.

R. S. Watkins of Franklin County and Chris Sheets, however, refused to sign even this.

"I didn't come here to sign anything and I'm not going to be forced to," declared Watkins firmly.

Chris nodded approvingly and said fearlessly, "I came here as a citizen of the State of Alabama of the United States, and I don't have to sign anything to make me one. My name is already on record as opposing the Ordinance of Secession and whatever I might sign would not emphasize this or argue my loyalty to our country and our government any further!"

Baleful looks and glares focused upon him.

"You'll be put in jail if you don't sign," someone threatened.

Chris flared back indignantly, fearlessly. "Let them put me in jail if they think it will serve to make a traitor out of me. But I can assure you, I'll certainly never be a traitor enough to betray my people and my friends back home. If they want me to suffer for my country, I am better prepared to suffer as a traitor to the Rebels than as a traitor to the Union and to those I came here to represent." Chris was firm and determined and it was impossible to budge him.

"Tory! Tory! Black Republican! Thief! Robber!" members of the Secessionists jeered at him.

"Throw him in jail!" came shouts from several. "If he won't sign the ordinance, at least we can put him where he won't be heard!"

"Hang him!" cried others, more drastic in their beliefs and hot-headed. "He knows the law for traitors! Get rid of the rascal!"

Another cried, "Let's rid our country of the Tories of the Hills! They have got no business in our section! If

they think more of the Yankees than they do of our own State, then let them go to the Yankees at once. We'll be better off without them."

A great clamor was sweeping the Convention hall, where dozens were still hoping to force Chris to sign. He looked about him to see if any of those whom he knew were there, but now he saw none and wondered what had become of them. In the lobby of the capital building, he could see another group, such as the one he was in. He thought, "That must be Watkins, and they are trying to force him to sign."

"Sheets! A voice challenged him again, "are you going to sign this Ordinance or not?"

"Never!" Chris cried firmly, knowing even then what might well happen to him for remaining firm in his convictions. And a moment later action came. He found himself seized by the arms and coat collar and literally being rushed bodily from the hall. In vain did he struggle — there were too many against him. He was thrown into a heavy carriage and the driver lashed the horses — he was rushed off to the jail, a prisoner.

Back of the bars at last, with the doors locked on him, Chris Sheets sat on the dirty cot in his cell and tried to reason things out. He was not scared, he decided, but he was shaking with indignation for those who were passing as champions of State's rights and the people's rights that were so obsessed with Satan that they would force one to endure such mockery; resort to intimidation. His mind reflected back to the Convention. To Bill Yancey, who had dominated the Convention as he had dominated the State delegates to the Democratic Convention — as he had dominated everything. He could see him in his men-

tal picture as he advocated the reviving of the name Tories, which was used in 1776. He could hear again the shouts from his bellows-voice as he declared that all who would not support the State after Secession ought to be dealt with as traitors. He knew who the power was behind all this — while Yancey was not the one who had thrown him in jail, still, he was sure he was the one who had commanded it to be done.

Chris reflected still further. "If that is the champion of liberty, the champion of state's rights — if that is the kind of leaders we are to work with and support or defend, then let me die the death of a traitor! Those devils are not interested in justice. They care nothing for human rights. All they want and all they will have are their own ways!"

He had a lot of time to reflect on all these things, for he was not to be set free very quickly. He found himself hungry after a bit, and when food was finally brought to him, he found it to be terrible — in fact, everything here was repulsive. This, then, he realized sadly, was the fruits of Political Tyranny.

The beautiful homes and farms he had seen on the way here were all bitter dregs in his cup. They were all accomplices to the wiles of Secession. The beautiful young woman with her pretentious gown, with its trimmings of silver, gold and pearls, was a part of this sinful scheme of rebellion.

He realized full well how he could get out of his prison cell and be free again. He had been put in it until he would agree to sign that bill. Well, he would never sign it, if he were forced to rot here!

* * *

When Lang C. Allen and Winston Steadham returned home they told the true state of affairs. Told of how Sheets and others were imprisoned to make them sign the bill. Told how many slipped away rather than be forced to do what they knew to be wrong.

Tempers rose. Will Yancey and the other fire-eaters were driving their country into war. And it looked like war would break out in Alabama before it did anywhere else.

The slave owners of the northern counties of Alabama were also alarmed because of the opposition being shown by the cooperationists to their requests for volunteers. At this time most all the county offices of the section were held by the plantation and slave owners. They were called upon to give much of their time in recruiting the men and in providing food and transportation for those who were willing to go to the army. They were also busy making trips to the conferences being held throughout the different sections of the South. Some of those who were in sympathy with the Secessionists were apprehensive of the strategy used by the leaders of the Confederacy in trying to drive the people of the State rather than trying to persuade them.

For instance — Dr. Kaiser, in trying to persuade Buddy and Lucian West, sons of Buck West, to go as volunteers to the army, told them: "Boys, you have here a real chance to serve your country and your home by going to defend our South against the invading Yankees!"

Lucian, the elder of the two, of a quiet nature, made no reply or showed any signs of concern about the matter. Buddy, however, quick-witted and of stern determination, replied shrewdly, "Doc, we haven't got any slaves to fight for. Why don't you folks that have the slaves

volunteer? You are the ones that have been talking about the war and Secession so much."

More and more families that had lived side by side since the country had been settled, became estranged. Even in the same families there were some who were volunteering for service in the Confederate forces, while others were swearing that they would not support the "Rebel Government."

All this, naturally, was very disconcerting and discouraging as well as confusing to the poor people of the section. They had been taught that war was evil; that the Southern people were wrong in breaking away from the Union. Now it was perplexing to them to be asked to take part in that which they had been taught was wrong.

Mothers wept bitterly on seeing their sons leaving home to fight against each other.

Chapter III

CONVENTION PLANS

After the Secession Convention had ended and the representatives had returned to their homes there was an increase of unrest and anxiety among the people. Now that the State had seceded from the Union, President Lincoln, in his inaugural address in March, had virtually obligated the Federal Government to the task of coercing the seceded States back into the fold.

Throughout the State there was a yielding of those opposed to Secession, except in the northern counties. And in those counties many of those who had opposed the signing of the Ordinance of Secession had conceded their position in respect to the intentions of the Federal Government in its effort to coerce the States and drive them back into the Union. Some of the representatives who had refused to sign the Ordinance, together with their constituents, had turned in support of the Confederacy.

Even this, however, had not accomplished that which the ones who had so eagerly supported Secession had claimed that it would. They now saw that they would not be able to bluff the Federal Government and that nothing short of an all-out war would accomplish their aims.

The people in the mountains of North Carolina, Virginia, Tennessee and Alabama were still talking of breaking away from the Southern States and forming another by the name of "Nickajack."

In Winston County the people were still seething over the way in which Chris Seets had been treated at Montgomery during the Secession Convention. While other sections of the State had responded generously with their quotas of volunteers for drill and occupational duties the counties, Winston, Marion, Fayette, Lawrence and Franklin, had contributed but few toward the cause.

A spirit of unrest had characterized the farmers in this section. Many of them had spent their time in meetings of protest and cooperationists organizations until their crops were generally delayed. The sight of Chris Sheets, who now appeared to his people as somewhat of a martyr, and hearing him tell of his imprisonment during the Secession Convention, filled his followers in Winston County, and his sympathizers in the adjoining counties with a spirit of condemnation and at the same time furnished fuel for the flames of anarchy, before unthought of among the citizens of the country.

When news reached the people of this section that Fort Sumter had been reduced on April 13th, instead of them accepting it as an act of self-defense, they opposed it as an act of aggression on the part of the Confederacy and as but another step in the well-planned strategy of the "Fire-Eaters" to get the country into war.

Although the sentiments of the people were generally against war and the preparations that were being made, it was hard for the rural people of the hill section to take any concerted action or to give expression to their desires except through conversation with their neighbors and small isolated groups who had signed petitions of protest, to the actions being taken. Besides, many of them who had voted for the Union in the Secession election along with their followers had already given up their cause as

lost and were now advising the people to fall in line with the rest of the State in defense of their homes.

The cooperationists, led by Chris Sheets, Bill Looney, Bill Weatherford, Tom Pink Curtis, Newt Austin, Bill Dodd, Clint Tittle, and others, did all they could to try to organize and persuade their friends and others against the support of the State in its Secession scheme. They canvassed their own and adjoining counties, trying to get action in breaking away from the State and forming a State loyal to the Federal Government. But it seemed useless — their actions were countered with the boasts of the Secessionists, that they would not need their support. The battle of Virginia was being fought. And all reports reaching home were of successes of the Southern armies.

About the first of June a meeting of the leaders of Winston County was held at Houston, the purpose being to set a time and place for the meeting of those loyal to the Union in the several counties, to take concerted action against the Rebel States.

The meeting, however, seemed spiritless, devoid of power or leadership without Chris Sheets — but he was due to appear before long, and those present waited on the porch of the courthouse for him to come and direct them in their deliberations.

"I can't imagine what has been keeping Chris," Newt Austin, a young man who had been waiting for a long time, complained anxiously to the other impatient, worried men.

"Maybe them dog-gonned Rebels have him again," speculated Bill Dodd. "They'd shore get him if they could! They've got it in for him in particular!"

"Chris shore caused them a passel a truble down at Mungummry," Clint Tittle laughed. "I ain't seed Chris

since he come home."

"He'll be showing up pretty soon. Chris is a pretty busy man in these parts here of late," Tom Pink Curtis assured them.

When Chris finally arrived, the spirit and fervor with which he was received by the group was indicated by Clint Tittle, who jumped off the porch and met him a good ways down the road.

"Hidy, Chris!" He grabbed Sheets' hand in both of his. "Drat my hide if I ain't glad to see ye!" he exclaimed. "It's the fust time I've seen ye since them Rebels got a hold'a ye. It's a good thing they turn'd ye outa thar — we'd a already been down thar and a had the whole place of Montgommery tore up fore now if'n they hadn' a let ye out!"

"Glad to see you, Clint!" smiled Chris, his heart warming at the loyal words of the other. "It sure is good to be out and away from that mob. Old Yancey, Brooks, Calhoun — and the whole bunch of Rebs!"

Calhoun of South Carolina, had been invited to come and address the Convention, and he was soundly hated by the cooperationists.

"Howdy, Chris!" several voices spoke the greeting at the same time, as Sheets came toward the porch.

"Greetings men! Greetings!" cried Chris. "Glad to see every last one of you."

"Good morning, Christopher!" Judge Oran Davis spoke with a warm handshake. Others came close and slapped him on the shoulders. "We have been a bit uneasy about you for a time, since we heard that you were stuck in jail so unjustly. Mighty glad to see you out. I was afraid that some of them hot-heads down there might let their

feelings run away with them and you wouldn't get back."

Chris smiled grimly. "They just saw that it wouldn't help matters to keep me there any longer," he explained. "Fact is, they knew that they were turning the whole north section of the State against them."

"No they warn't!" interrupted Bill Weatherfort. "The whole danged North Alabama is already against 'em! They know'd they better let you out a thar or they'd a got thar skulls blow'd off!"

"Looks like a poor way to win a war, fighting among thar-selves. I reckon they know'd that we had already told you how we stood on the matter, didn't they?" chimed in Buck West, an old man who had been very free all the while in expressing his contempt for the Rebels.

After shaking hands and greeting the others present, in which the same sentiments were shown, Chris Sheets, without any formality introduced the object of the meeting.

"Gentlemen," he began, "we all know that a large majority of the citizens of this section are opposed to the Secession, that we had rather remain loyal to the Union, to our flag, and to our country. However, we have spent our time working separately or in smaller groups. We have not yet been able to exert enough influence to attract any attention of either the State or Federal Government. The thing we need to do is to get all those interested in the county, together with those of like convictions of the other counties of North Alabama and draw up some kind of resolutions that will state our wishes and appeal for help from the Government."

Shouts of, "That's right! That's right!" supported Chris' statement.

"But how in the world are we going to be able to get all that are interested together?" questioned Newt Austin anxiously.

"That's our problem," agreed Pink Curtis. "It is not a matter of their failure to agree to your proposal. But, how? And where? To get the people together is a task!"

"Yeah," Bill Weatherford suggested, "we can't depend on the newspapers cause thar ain't one in ten folks in the country that read the papers. 'Sides, if them papers print anything they'd all be again us. What we need is to get us a paper or somethin' of our own and ax the people what we want them to do."

Chris Sheets rose from the split-log bench where he had been sitting for a time. The eyes of the entire group were fastened upon him. They loved to watch Chris. And they were expecting him to come up with some important solution to the hectic problem.

Now he explained, "I think that would take too long and would be too uncertain. We would still be without any way of getting an expression from the folks. What we need is to stage some kind of a rally, where all the folks can come together and we can let them know how things stand, and how the 'Fire-Eaters' are already laying plans to kill every one of us who won't go to war and fight against our country. Then we can find out what the people are willing to do, and let each other know what we are willing to do in case we are attacked. We then need to place our plans in the hands of the Federal Government and ask them for help."

"Whar'l we meet, men? Somebody jest name the place — we'll have the whole generation thar, wherever you say and any time," responded Wiley Dodd.

"The best place I know is Looney's Tavern, right here in our own Winston County," Clint Tittle allowed.

"Good fer ye, Clint! Good fer ye! That's whar I say let's have it!" Bill Weatherford seconded the motion. "Bill Looney'll shore be glad fer us to come thar. Case Bill is shore mad 'bout them d—— rebels a'keepin' Chris in jail!"

Newt Austin, standing, leaned against one of the big cedar posts which supported the roof of the porch of the courthouse was the first to see Bill Looney as he appeared over the hill riding toward the courthouse. "There's Bill Looney now!" He pointed.

"Hit shore is, he-he!" laughed Bill Weatherford, as he squirted amber through his front teeth, "Hit's jest like the old sayin' — talk about the old devil and he'll shore appear!"

"And I'd as leave meet the devil any time as to meet Bill Looney, if he's mad at me," agreed Clint Tittle.

"That's shore right," Weatherford spoke again. "Bill's jest lak his old Pa, Mose Looney — good feller till ye get him mad and hell's broke loose then!"

"Hidy, Bill! Git down and carry that Jack-rabbit a while," Bill Dodd, son of Wiley Dodd, greeted the newcomer teasingly, and a bit scornfully in reference to the small mule Looney was riding.

"Don't cha like the mule, squirt?" Bill retorted, sliding off the little black burrow in front of the courthouse. "If ye don't, I'll as soon grab the mule by the tail and wear ye out wid him!"

Young Bill's father tried to fix matters for the boy whose joke had somewhat riled Bill Looney, who now came to-

ward the boy swinging a long, heavy raw-hide, leather rein. Young Bill scooted for cover.

"I reckon as how the boy hain't plum larnt how to keep his mouth shet, Bill," said Wiley Dodd. "You'll not be takin no sepshun to that kind a jabs nohow, Bill. We've gotta sight worse fix to mend anyway if I can see straight."

Bill Looney was a small, middle-aged man with jet black hair and eyebrows. His eyes were black as charcoal, separated by a thin, high-bridged nose. His chin was sharp and slightly protruding. His ears were small and a bit pinched at the top. His quick, cat-like movements suggested animal features, which, perhaps, later gained for him the title, "The Black Fox."

"Howdy, Bill! Howdy!" several voices greeted the touchy newcomer at the same time, hoping to change his intent. "We were just talking about you, Bill."

Bill's eyes darted mechanically in the direction of Chris Sheets, who had spoken.

"Why, howdy, Chris!" Bill grabbed the hand of Sheets. "Bless my d—— hide! I thought them Rebels had you, Chris. I'm shore proud you're here, boy!"

"I've been pretty busy since I came home. No time now for a fellow to be doing much traveling, unless he has pretty important business," confessed Chris with a rueful smile.

"That's shore God's truth, Chris! That's shore so," Bill agreed.

"We were talking of coming up to see you one of these days, Bill," Chris went on. "We are going to have a rally and someone has suggested that we have it at your

tavern. It's a good thing you came so we could invite you to it," he ended jokingly.

The other beamed. "That's the place, men! Be-gad! I got the whole place around thar that I ain't tetched. Don't know whar I'll tech it or not. Looks like a feller can't farm and fight, too. And it shore looks like we're a'goin' a haft fight!"

"I know'd Bill Looney'd be glad to let us have anything he's got. I've know'd the Looneys plum on back from the time Old Mose, Bill's old pa, come here with the Seviers," Bill Weatherford complimented.

"When are we going to have it, boys? Somebody say when we'll have it! I'm ready myself," Jerry Burns, who had been present all the while, but until now had remained silent, broke in.

"We don't want to waste no time round here, if'n it means keepin' us outa the war, that's what I'm fer!" Bill Looney opined.

Arch Lovett suggested, when the matter of time was brought up, "We'd better wait a while, hadn't we, till the farmers can get a bit nearer done laying-by? Lots of folks would like to meet with us but they wouldn't, on account of living so far they wouldn't lose the time from their crops."

"Good idea, Arch," agreed Bart Pugh.

"I ain't in favor of waitin' for nothin'!" Bill Weatherford cut in, pounding his fist in his palm. His narrow, slanting eyes were blinking. "We ain't goin' a do no good makin' a crop nohow. B'sides — who's got any heart to tend a crop anyway?" He was fiery at the end.

Pink Curtis then spoke sagely, "We may not even get to stay around here long, let alone make any crop, if things get worse. They are saying now that they can get

all the men they need for volunteers, but I doubt it. We will all be called upon before we are thinking about it!"

Chris Sheets, who had sat quietly for several minutes during the conversation offered a suggestion: "Let's set the fourth of July, fellows, if that suits you. That will give us time to get the news around, and by that time most of the folks will be through with their crops. Besides, that is a time of patriotism, all the people will be thinking of our country and will want to enter into the spirit of the celebration on that day."

The rest all agreed that the day mentioned would be the most suitable for the planned meeting, and that Bill Looney's tavern would be the best place.

"Tell everybody you can," was the byword, "the Secessionists, too — we want to show them that this is not a forcing proposition, like they've been trying to carry on among themselves," said Chris. "Tell everyone to tell everyone else — and the word will get around enough!"

It was decided to appoint several men to ride over the countryside for a few days and tell the folks far and near.

And so the preparations for the great meeting to help keep them out of Civil War, to save their country's unity, were made and begun.

Chapter IV

THE CONVENTION AT LOONEY'S TAVERN

The war was the big topic — Secession — the rights of the Southerners to keep slaves. The United States were no longer united — and battles were raging daily.

The Southern armies, under General Lee, were still successful. Volunteers were still being urged to help drive the "Yankees" from Southern soil. The Confederate site of government had been moved from Montgomery, where it had been formed, to Richmond, near the sight of battle, in order to encourage the armies and to direct the fighting. To many people this meant that the war was still a long way off; while to others, who knew more about war, it seemed so close that precious time was already lost, for organization and preparation for defense of their homes and themselves.

The people of north Alabama were proud of what had been done as a means of averting war in their counties. They liked to talk of the plans for the Convention at Looney's Tavern — hoping it would do a lot of good. The farmers with their families spent long hours in their crops, trying to make Wednesday, July the third, the deadline for their laying-by. Others were determined to be there if it necessitated quitting their crops before they were finished. Weather conditions were favorable for most of them to get through with their work in time for the meeting. Some even spent the Sunday afternoons

working at small odd jobs, which they, heretofore, would not have thought of doing on Sunday, in the hope of finishing so as to be able to attend the Convention. Neighbor helped neighbor.

Then it was time for the Convention — and men, who, for a long time had not been seen attending the rural churches were present. And before this — they had attended church in the interests of telling their friends about the Convention and even having their preachers announce it.

Looney's Tavern was located in the east central part of Winston County, near the Burleson and Burnham Crossroads. The Burleson Road ran in the direction of Pikesville, County Seat of Marion County and Cullman, County Seat of Cullman County. The Burnham Road ran in the direction of Moulton, seat of Lawrence County and Jasper, County Seat of Walker County; a central location.

The tavern was a large log-building, consisting of two large rooms downstairs. The front room was used for a saloon. It had a bar across the middle, made of a huge split-log resting upon strong posts for legs. On the left side of the room was a sprawling fireplace with a tremendous arch-stone. The fireplace was equipped with strong iron bars which served as a barbecue grill. Tables made of wide split-slabs with legs driven into auger-holes and stools of the same construction composed the furniture for the saloon.

The back room was much larger. It had a door in one corner leading into the saloon and another in the back used as an exit from the building. The floors of the building were made of puncheons; those of the big room

being expertly hewn and tightly fitted together. This room was an excellent place for the square-dance. It was widely known and constantly used for this purpose. There were no furnishings in this room except a long split-log bench along each side and a couple of home-made split-bottomed chairs, as accommodations for the musicians. A stairway on the outside led to the sleeping quarters for Looney and his guests.

This tavern was the gathering place for parties and square-dances in the winter months and Bill was very pleased that the leaders of the county had selected his tavern for the place to hold the Convention.

Bill always took the responsibility of seeing that everybody conducted himself decently while on his premises. It was well known to those who lived near and soon related to strangers, that he had shot four or five men who had disobeyed his orders in failing to leave his place when he had warned them.

* * *

The people began arriving for the meeting as early as Monday, July the first. They had come in their covered wagons or with camping equipment and pitched camp near the spring which gurgled through the woods near the tavern. The first spent their time in a most pleasant manner. The men helped in killing and barbecuing a large number of wild-hogs, turkeys, cows, and deer.

A long pit had been dug in the ground for the purpose of preparing their barbecue. Women who had come with their families, spent their time there in baking bread for the Convention, while their children engaged in hunting and playing games in the forest. The greater portion of the nights were spent in the tavern dancing and listening

to music. A goodly supply of whiskey, beer and cider was stored ready for the occasion.

When the Fourth of July finally came, there were hundreds of persons already present, anxiously participating in and anticipating the events of the day. They were elated, happy, greeting old friends and meeting new kin whom they had never seen before.

Hundreds upon hundreds more came from the early hours of morning till almost noon.

Now and then the arrival of certain persons provoked comment from those already there, as to whether or not that particular person was for or against the intentions of the meeting. Great surprise was manifested on the part of some that certain men known to be definitely against the aims of the Convention would consent to lend prestige to the meeting by their presence.

"Howdy, Uncle Dick!" Bill Weatherford spoke jovially to Dick Payne, an old man, who had been active in support of the Secession. "Jest allowed as you'd a been meetin' with the 'Rebels' sommer's today, Dick. Didn't low you'd show up wid a bunch o' 'Tories.' First thing anybody knows, Dick, you'll be a joinin' up wid us!"

The old man grunted and walked briskly past the group on his way to the tavern.

The selection of Looney's Tavern as the place for the Convention proved to be a wise choice. Strangers who had never been there before were most complimentary about the place. The interests of the crowd were divided between the long, improvised table near the spring, where the barbecue was being served free of charge, and the tavern where men vied with each other for entrance to the saloon.

Occasionally a change from the spirit of fun and laughter, to gloom, was caused when someone reminded the rest of the tragedy of war and the ruin the country would suffer unless their meeting proved a success.

In the dance room, many of the men sat on the benches slumped against the wall, or piled one on the other asleep on the floor, exhausted from their long trip.

One old man, Buz Tidwell, with a bushy head of snowy hair, sawed away at his fiddle, playing one old-time tune after another to entertain the folks, many of whom were enjoying square and other old-time dances. Prudie, his wife, would not enter the saloon when searching for her husband, but went around to the back door to find him. After all — he had to get more rest for a man of his age, she thought.

A large farm-bell at the cabin of Bill Looney, near the spring, tolled loud and long, summoning everyone to the spring where the barbecue was ready to be served and to gather for the opening of the Convention.

Men of every age and description began pouring in from all directions. The grove with the underbrush cleared away, made a fine place for such an assembly. The slanting hill the most of the way around the spring made an ideal place for the audience to stand and see the speaker.

A long time was consumed in serving the throng with bread and barbecue. Finally, with the food gone, a portion of the long table was used as a speakers' platform.

Chris Sheets was now the center of attention, being the chairman of the Convention. The first thing he did was appoint a committee to draw up resolutions for the meeting. Then he called upon outstanding leaders and speak-

ers opposed to the Secession. Among these were Nicholas Davis and Jeremiah Clements, both of Huntsville, Alabama.

Chris was a good orator and made the big speech of the day. Everyone said he made the greatest speech of his life — he presented that which the people wanted to hear. He told in stirring tones of the way he had been threatened and embarrassed and harassed at Montgomery during the Secession Convention.

"It is impossible to work with old Yancey, Hilliard, Brooks, Dragoon, and the rest of them fire-eaters in any other way than to submit to their selfish and foolish notions," he told his hearers. "They are determined that no one will be heard but themselves, and then they want to make it appear that they are speaking for all the people of the State. They are foolish to think that everybody in the country is for Secession, and they are bigger fools to think that they can drive us to fight for them against our flag and our friends. They think that the only right to speak is to say the things they want said. Because they could not force me to say them and to sign the Ordinance, they tried to make me quit talking against it. When they couldn't do it they put me in jail. They said that I'd never be heard. Thank God, I can be heard!"

An ovation from a throng of between twenty-five hundred and three thousand resounded through the hills. Even though the people were deeply stirred with the tragedies of war, they were happy for this opportunity to express themselves in their opposition to the Secession and treatment they were receiving at the hands of the Confederacy. And they rejoiced at the thoughts of having leaders who were willing to unselfishly carry out the

wishes of the people. They rejoiced that they now had the privilege of showing to their leaders their appreciation for their steadfastness, their loyalty to their leaders and their desire to support them and back them in every undertaking.

Next on the program the Committee on Resolutions submitted their work. These expressed in the main the sentiments already held by most of those assembled. They were relatively the same wishes as had been presented by the speakers of the occasion.

And Tom Pink Curtis, the chairman of the committee, read them to the convention. The resolutions in substance, were:

1: — "We commend the Honorable Christopher C. Sheets and other representatives who stood with him, for their loyalty and fidelity to the people whom they represented in voting for the Union first, last and all of the time.

2: — "We agree with Jackson, that a State cannot legally get out of the Union; but if we are mistaken in this, and a State can lawfully and legally secede or withdraw, being only a part of the Union, then a county, any county, being a part of a State, by the same process of reasoning, can cease to be a part of the State."

Uncle Dick Payne, a large man, well in his seventies, with long whiskers, in homespun jeans, sitting on the edge of the table in a deep, coarse voice burst out in a sarcastic laugh:

"Ho! Ho! Winston secedes! The free State of Winston! The free State of Winston!"

The eyes of the entire crowd were upon Uncle Dick. He had had his say. Waves of whispers traveled throughout the crowd.

After this interruption the third resolution was read:

3: — "We think our neighbors in the South made a mistake when they bolted the Convention and the Democratic Party, resulting in the election of Mr. Lincoln, and that they made a greater mistake when they attempted to secede and set up a new government. However, we do not desire to see our neighbors in the South suffer wrong, and, therefore, we are not going to take up arms against them; but, on the other hand, we are not going to shoot at the flag of our fathers' Old Glory, the flag of Washington, Jefferson and Jackson. Therefore, we ask the Confederacy on one hand and the Union on the other, to leave us alone, unmolested, that we may work out our own political and financial destiny here in the hills and mountains of Northwest Alabama!" He turned then to Chris, who rose and mounted the platform amidst a thunder of applause.

"Gentlemen and fair ladies," Chris began, smiling, "we ask all who hold such as has just been read, to be their convictions and are willing to make such their guiding principles, and besides, will support and uphold such resolutions, to signify the same by the affirmative sign — Aye!"

A responsive "Aye!" came in a most triumphant and enthusiastic shout, reverberating through the hills.

Then J. L. Meeks, an old man with long white hair and short, pointed chin-whiskers arose.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I rise not to cast a negative vote or to speak a word against the proposals just submitted. However, I do feel that there is one thing of momentous importance which has been overlooked in the deliberations of this meeting — and that is the lack of

organization and preparation sufficient to obtain recognition of either the State or Union. I wonder if it would not be better and serve better to the advantage of the people of this section, holding the views expressed in the resolutions, to maintain our present position as counties of the State, in order to retain our representation in the State Legislature. Also, to retain our representatives as officials who are duly elected by the majority of the people in the counties rather than risk having our offices claimed by someone else on the basis of our being a disorganized and rebellious people. It seems to me that in this way, the sentiments and wishes of the people can better be conveyed to the administration of the State or the Union. Otherwise, we have no way of sending representatives to either with claims of representing a lawful and organized people.

"Besides to withdraw will make of us enemies, cut off from the rest of the Union, completely surrounded by the seceded States and left to the mercies of the rebel armies. It appears to me that we could come nearer being recognized as neutral if we adopt the resolution asking that our rights as neutral citizens be recognized without seceding."

Pink Curtis replied promptly. "In view of the facts just presented," he declared, "it does seem a wise thing for us to postpone the act of Secession. We can, though, state in these resolutions our plea to both sides asking both the Union and the Confederacy to respect us, recognizing our neutrality. Let us retain the resolution wherein we express our rights, to secede — but withhold the act of doing so at this time. Then — now, without the re-reading of the resolutions, may we hear again an expression of the willingness of all present to adopt and support the sentiments of these resolutions?"

Again an "Aye!" this time much louder and of greater duration than before rent the air.

The time had now come to dismiss the formal meeting and it was done with a prayer by preacher Elliot, in which he earnestly petitioned the blessings of God upon all who sought peace and deliverance from the ravages of war, that they might be spared the awful conflict.

The people now began to separate into smaller groups and many started for their homes. Soon all were heading home — shaking hands on parting, talking excitedly about the developments. A feeling of tenseness still hung over most of them, for they realized that bad times were very likely ahead of them. Their request to have their neutrality respected was not very apt to be recognized.

They went back to their homes with heavy hearts, fearful that their heritage would before long be in waste and ruin.

Chapter V

THE DISSENSION

Nathan Parker, a former Probate Judge of Winston County, was one of the largest slave holders of the county. He lived in Brown Creek Bottom, in the southwest section of the county — although wealthy, he was not pretentious.

His plantation was one of credit — an example to those who contended that the institution of Slavery was not an evil and hellish sin perpetuated through brutal force on human beings. His "darkies" had nice cabins and were contented and happy and well cared for and took great pride in Massa's farm. To the amazement of many of the slave owners, Judge Parker had for years, run his plantation with a Negro foreman.

The Parker family consisted of — himself, his wife, a frail, slender, soft-spoken woman — their daughter, Charity, sixteen — cultured, refined, tall, well-developed. Sincy, Charity's maid, who had grown up with her. The two thought a great deal of each other, being companions since childhood.

Charity had gone to school as much as the schools nearby could help her and was now getting ready to go to Huntsville in the fall to attend a woman's school, and had asked her father to allow her to take "Sincy" with her, not because she would need her so much while there, but through fear that if she left her behind some of the jealous Negroes might find some opportunity to mistreat her.

At the north end of Judge Parker's plantation lived Jack Walker, a man of his early thirties. He owned his place through inheritance from his father. He had at first owned some three hundred acres of the best land in Brown Creek Bottom, but had of necessity, sold more than half of it. He had never liked the institution of Slavery any more than his father had — and had none.

The Walkers had not only been without slaves but had been opposed to Slavery to the extent that they had condemned it. And of recent months Jack had been active in the meetings in that section which advocated the breaking away from the State rather than fight for the Confederacy. Because of his having a large family in which there had been much sickness, Jack had had to sell quite a lot of his place; first a forty, then an eighty and afterward another forty. Judge Parker had bought the last forty which he had sold, from him and had succeeded in buying the hundred-twenty which he had previously sold to Sam Noles, another of the Brown Creek Bottom, with a fairly good-size plantation, and several Negroes.

Because of recent illness, Walker had been compelled to borrow more money from Judge Parker and had given a promise of a deed to his place if he should fail to pay it.

In the summer of 1861 the crops were very poor in that section. First, a lot of rain that spring made the crops on such land late and then the extreme drouth at the time seemed would cut the crops in half. With the war coming on that would perhaps take both Jack and his oldest son into the services of the army, if it continued long, conditions painted a dark picture for the security of his place and the family.

As the two worked in the field they discussed their problem, the older man beginning to confide in his son. Bill was a good worker and glad to share the responsibilities of the family with his father.

It was a very hot day in July. Bill and his father were working in their crop trying hard to finish in order to be able to attend the community revival scheduled for the next week.

"Say, Pa," Bill asked, "the money on that loan is not due till next fall, is it?"

His father sighed as he replied, "Well, not exactly. But, you see — it was really due last fall. But I couldn't pay it and the Judge offered to put if off till next fall. So I —"

"Well, then, why are you worrying so, Pa?"

"Son, I hate to tell you," said the father. "You know that we have lived here in this neighborhood, in Brown Creek Bottom, with Judge Parker all our lives and we have always been the best of friends. I've voted for him whenever he ran for office — and he has hired me to do his building for him and everything has been so pleasant, but —" A look of anxiety clouded his face. He wiped the perspiration from his brow with his shirt-sleeve. "It looks like we have got too many sections of the county right here in Brown Creek Bottom."

"You mean the war, Pa?"

"That's it. The Judge wouldn't speak to me all the way back from Looney's Tavern yesterday till we got to our house. He told me then that I could get the money I owe him, at once."

"Ah, shucks! Forget it!" Bill chided. "He don't need that money. He is just puffed up! Judge Parker will be all right."

"No, Son," his dad answered sadly. "This thing is worse than that. The roots of this war are deeper than that. It is not a matter of Judge needing the money — I don't think that ordinarily he covets our land. But, it's a matter of our difference about Slavery. He is mad at me because he knows that I am opposed to Slavery and he wants to use this debt as a point of contention between us."

"Pa," Bill asked, "did you make Judge Parker a mortgage on our place?"

"No, but, Son, that's not it. I have always been just as good as my word and I owe him, so if I can't pay, I'll just be compelled to sign him a deed to the land."

"Don't you do it, Pa!" Bill spoke emphatically. "If that is the only reason he has for wanting you to pay it! If this war comes on here he may never live to need it anyway."

"But that still wouldn't satisfy the debt!"

"And that would not change his mind toward you and your idea of freeing the slaves if you paid him a dozen times." Bill's reasoning was convincing.

* * *

The following Sunday was the day for the protracted meeting to begin at Hope Well, the community church, a few miles north toward Double Springs. They had begun their meeting on the first Sunday in July since the congregation was first organized. This was the "love feast" of the year, when they had their foot-washing and the Lord's Supper. People from the Southwest section of Winston County all attended this service. People all over the country had been aware of the change the war had caused in their religious services. Some were waiting,

with grave apprehension, the outcome of the meeting this summer. Some had even said that the Convention at Looney's Tavern would ruin their meetings.

The breach in the church was worse than any had anticipated. Brother Davis, their beloved preacher, was not there to begin the meeting.

Judge Parker, one of the Deacons, failed for the first time to be remembered, to attend. The services seemed cold, spiritless, except for the fervent prayer of Jack Walker, in which he prayed earnestly, voicing the wish "That harmony and friendship might prevail in their sacred little assembly."

The absence of those who favored Secession was conspicuous. Others who had tried to assume a neutral position toward both sides were not there. It was remembered now, how that last November the Sunday following the election of Mr. Lincoln, Preacher Davis had urged the people to throw off the "Yoke of Bondage," and quit the Union. This, together with the influence of the slave holders had prevented his coming that day to begin the meeting.

After the services had ended, many a disparaging word was spoken between those present; many a forlorn look was displayed on the faces of those leaving the little church. Enmity and dissension had wrought its fangs into the hearts of a once peaceful and loving people.

The lot of happiness and peace seemed left to the young folks who walked along the dusty road — and among these were Charity, called "Cherry" by all her friends — and Bill Walker. Cherry would have had to walk home alone as her father was not there — and she did not want the carriage sent for her.

Jack Walker, the boy's father, shook his head worriedly and said to his wife, "Mom, I wish Bill hadn't done that. May just make things worse for us."

* * *

The opportunity of walking home with Cherry was wonderful to Bill. They had always been playmates, but now — older, he had begun to think of her differently than before. The girl seemed happy with him, too.

"Cherry," he told her when they reached the gate before her house, "I wish your father and mine could be friends as they used to. Don't you?"

He had been thinking all the way of what his dad had told him the week before.

"Why," cried the girl in surprise, "aren't they?" Bill swallowed hard as he saw how bewildered she was. He was temporarily at a loss as to what he should do or say and wondered if he had made a mistake in telling her something she did not know. He tried to smile as he changed the subject.

"Cherry," he said in a lighter mood, "I hope you have a good time on your trip in Memphis." She had been telling him of her father's trip to Memphis that week and that he had already promised her that she might go.

Her expression changed and Bill was glad as he turned to go back home.

* * *

"Ida," Jack Walker said to his wife after they had finished breakfast early Monday morning. "The Judge has been after me for a long time to repair his roof on his house. I promised him that I would get to it just as soon as our laying-by was done. I think I'll go over and talk with him about it this morning. Maybe it will give me

a chance to show him that I still want his friendship. Besides — if I could work out part of that debt we owe him, that ought to show him that we are willing to pay it."

"I sure hope he will," Ida agreed. "The Judge is sure powerfully out with somebody. When he fails to go to church, there's something bound to be wrong."

* * *

Zeb, the colored man, was already seated and holding the reins in the waiting carriage when Jack arrived. Mr. Parker and Cherry were coming across the yard toward the waiting carriage. Jack saw that Judge Parker looked haggard and pale, like he had lost sleep for several nights.

"Howdy, Judge! And Cherry!" Jack spoke pleasantly.

Mr. Parker was already passing the gate; he had not spoken.

"Howdy, Mr. Jack!" Cherry returned with a friendly smile.

Judge Parker was already standing beside the carriage waiting. He turned around to see if Cherry was coming.

"Judge, I'd like to speak a word with you this morning," Jack offered.

Mr. Parker was assisting Cherry into the carriage. "I came to tell you that I am ready to do the repair on your roof if you want me to," Jack persisted.

"I've no time to talk business with enemies!" came the surprising burning retort. Jack started back. That was the first time that Jack Walker had in all his life found himself referred to as an enemy.

"But this is as friend to friend," Jack choked. He was deeply hurt.

"There is no such a thing as a friend, who will vote to destroy our South and take our Negroes away from

us," came the caustic reply. Then Judge Parker said, not speaking to anyone in particular, "We've got a hard drive to Tuscumbia by train time. Let's go!"

Cherry looked pathetically from her father to Jack Walker, but got in. The carriage whisked away.

Jack stood, resting his hand on the gate post for a couple of minutes. He knew that it was not a matter of time that had prevented their conversation. Finally he turned and walked back to his own home — his, for how much longer he wondered.

* * *

On the trip Cherry insisted that her father explain his strange attitude toward the man who had always been their good friend and neighbor — and the Judge did so, from his own viewpoint — explaining how Jack was siding with those who wanted to take their slaves away from them. She could hardly believe such a terrible thing possible.

In Memphis, however, Cherry had an enjoyable time, although she couldn't help but wonder what it would be like not to have "Sincy" any more.

She liked the hotels, except for the continual conversations of her father and other men — of war. The preparations for fighting, and means of securing men and supplies for the army.

And finally they were home again and now the Judge found himself busily engaged in informing the slave owners and other Secessionist leaders of the advice he had received, as to methods of helping in the war.

Among the many bits of strategy they had agreed upon — one was to keep the slaves as closely as they could and prevent them from having their meetings with other slaves and allow them no "Revival Meetings."

For years Mr. Parker had been one of the foremost advocates of preaching to his Negroes. He had learned that by converting them and teaching them that it was wrong to lie and steal he had solved one of the major problems on his plantation.

Now things were to be changed greatly — and Parker knew the change would be shocking to the slaves of Brown Creek Bottom. He called in Arelius, the foreman, for whom his Negroes all had a most honest regard. He was the only Negro on the plantation who had been allowed to learn to read and write a little. He was also the preacher for the slaves of Brown Creek. To Relus, as the man was nicknamed, he gave the job of breaking the news.

"Uum? Um?" came groans of dismay from the group of listening Negroes gathered under the well-shed beside the barn, as white, rolling eyes stared in the face of their councilor. Consternation seized them.

"I sho hates to have to tell yo de scourging bad news Massa don tole me!" said Relus. "We hain a low to hab our re-vi-val mee-tin no more! Sho makes ma spirit fall powfully low. Makes ma Lor hide from me. I sho is plum de vitalized bout hit!"

"How cum Massa say we hain a low to hab our big meetin'?" Lucinda, one of the younger women put the question to Relus. "Hain' Massa allus say fo us to hab our re-vival soon as layin'-by?"

"Right you is, Sister Lucinty. Bus Massa say hain no nigger lowed off'n no planashion no mo!"

"Lor! Lor!" sighed Lize, fanning herself with her long, stiff-crown bonnet. "Massa sho don turn us ober to de debil, when he won' low us to hab our re-vival!"

"Massa say Yankees Patarolda gwinna be down hea fo long snatchin' up eber nigger in de south whut hain right on his own planashion!"

"Low! Low!" moaned Stacia, old and wrinkled. Her lips were quivering; her long hands hung limp and trembling. The news was terrifying — especially the threats of "Yankee Pataroldas."

Tubby, one of the strong young bucks, just grown, was skipping along in front of the group on their way to the field, starting and stopping as if practicing fleeing from the "Yankee Patarolda" if he should show up. At the sight of his antics the entire group took up the chant:

"Run nigger run,
Ye betta git away.
De ole patarolda a git'cha!
De nigga run,
De nigga flew.
De nigga tore his weddin' shoe!"

* * *

Cherry found it impossible to understand all the strange new changes going on about her. Her father was called away on important business connected with the war. And it was arranged for Cherry and her mother to go to Huntsville so they could get settled well before school started in the fall. Cherry didn't like this at all, for she knew she would miss Bill Walker greatly — but this was the very reason why her mother and father had decided to take her away without further delay.

Chapter VI

THE HORRORS OF WAR COME TO ALABAMA

Chris Sheets hurried along through the heat of a late summer sun, heading for the home of Ida Gartman. As he neared the house he saw her father, T. B. Gartman, seated on the front porch.

"Come in, Christopher, come in, come in!" the soft-speaking Gartman, in his late fifties, invited. "I'm shore glad to see ye, Chris!" He rose from his chair as Chris came up the steps. "Ida is in the kitchen. She won't be out for a while. Chris, thar's somethin' I been a wantin' to ax ye. Air ye a gonna run for our representative again?" He pointed to a chair as he sat back down in his. "There, take that chair and tell me, Chris."

"Well, I don't know," Chris confessed. "I wanted to talk with you about it." He took the chair and sat in it close to Mr. Gartman. "I don't know whether it would be worth anything for us to have a man in the Legislature. Besides, the people might want somebody else to represent them and —" he hesitated a minute without finishing the statement.

"Thar ain't no doubt about it, Chris. No doubt about it — the people of this County all want you to go and represent us and we know ye air the man what'll shore stand up fer our cause. We air a shore gonna elect ye back to the Legislature." Gartman spoke with confidence.

"But Ida is against my going back to Montgomery,"

Chris spoke in a low tone to keep from being heard by anyone other than Gartman.

"I know what ye air a meaning'!" The man slapped Chris on the shoulder. "And young man, I know just what ye air up again! But I know ye can't be allowin' no woman to keep ye from a doin' what's yer duty. Besides, Ida orta be a knowin' that she can't be a keepin' a man yer age here with her no how. If ye didn't go to the Legislature them Rebels would be atter ye till ye'd have to leave home!"

Their conversation was interrupted as they saw Ida cross the hallway into the parlor.

"Excuse me. I'll want to talk with you some more," Chris said lightly as he got up to go in the house.

"Shore! Shore!" Gartman nodded his head in agreement.

"Howdy, Ida!" Chris greeted as he walked buoyantly into the room.

"Come in, Chris," she invited as she attempted to fix the cushion on the chair back. She turned the chair for Chris to sit in as she took another.

"Why, Ida, you look disturbed about something. What is the matter?" asked Chris wonderingly. He could see she was pale and uneasy.

"I feel that I have something to be disturbed about," she said candidly. "You are letting the people of this county talk you into running for the Legislature and you know what that will mean to you."

"But, Ida," he protested, "this is something that's important. The people feel that they've got to have someone to represent them in Montgomery. I reckon it had as well be me as anybody, if they want me. Surely you real-

ize that there are obligations on all of us because of this war and we just can't any of us be concerned about ourselves till it is over."

"Sure, I realize all this, Chris," she spoke passionately as she looked straight into his eyes. "I have realized all the while the burdens and deprivations of the war. I have realized also the grave responsibilities you have assumed, and the fine record you have made for yourself as leader of our people. You used to be mostly interested in me — you don't seem that way anymore. While I realize the things you think of, I also realize the rights of a woman to have a home and happiness with the one she loves."

"Ida, dear," Chris was serious. "These are the things we can least assure ourselves of until this conflict is over, and we can have peace here in this country again."

"Well," she protested, "you can certainly have no assurance of any peace or safety either by going back to Montgomery again. You know them Rebels and thugs there have put you in jail once and threatened to hang you because you would not vote like they told you. They would perhaps not just threaten you the next time. It looks to me like, that of all the ways you could help in the war, that to go back to Montgomery would be the poorest." She started to cry.

"Listen, Ida," Chris pleaded, disturbed. "Somebody's got to do this. Somebody's got to go to the Legislature and serve our people. They want me to go, and I had as well go as for anybody else. Why, even your Papa wants me to run for the office."

"Yes, I know!" Ida was crying aloud now. "I have begged him to quit persuading you. I wish that folks would leave you alone. I wish you would listen to me and not go."

Chris stood silently, looking out through the window, biting his fingernails. As he turned he saw Ida burying her face in her handkerchief. He nervously shifted the weight of his body from one foot to the other, trying to think, to reason. He remembered he had promised Ida, after he came back from Montgomery before that he'd never go back there again. There was no doubt in his mind but that she was right. To go back was sure to mean suffering, perhaps the loss of life. But he also knew that, like all the rest, he would have to do whatever he could to help his country.

"Ida, he braced himself to try to talk to her again, as he placed his hand lightly upon her shoulder. "Listen, dear," he tried to talk reassuringly, as she looked up at him with quivering lips, "I'll think more about this. I may even decide that I won't —" he didn't finish.

She cuddled close in his arms, happier than she had been in a long time.

"I can't promise though, for sure, dear," he hedged and then broke away, kissing her goodbye.

Mr. Gartman was no longer on the porch, but he found him seated on the root of a big oak tree beside the spring path.

"You know, now I've come to think about it," Chris said to the man, "I've just about decided that I won't let them elect me again. Ida is terribly upset about it — them Rebels are not going to allow anyone to go back to Montgomery, and stay there who opposes them. There is no telling what they will to do anybody who goes."

"Thar, thar, young man!" Gartman took Chris by the arm and held him firmly as they walked down the rough path over roots and rocks toward the spring. "You can't be allowin' the wimmin to be a tellin' ye what to do.

Kose they're a passel uv weak uns an' they don't allus understand the problems like us men do. They're a lot uv times a thinkin' more bout their own lot in this life than then they air about our country. The thing ye had better be a doin' is a giten ready to be lected back to the Legislature."

"But it doesn't seem right on account of our plans — when Ida don't want me to go," Chris protested feebly.

"Wal, I'll be danged if I low as ye need be a makin' no plans till this blamed war is over," grunted the other. "Kose thar ain't gonna be no peace nor no promise to nobody till this thing is over with and then ye can start a makin' yer plans."

"I have no doubt but that you are right," Chris admitted, "and I know that there is no use for us to try to get out of our duty. I am willing to do what I can, but I do hate to hurt —"

He continued on alone out across the hills in the direction of his home.

* * *

Throughout the summer and fall of 1861 bugles were blowing everywhere; men were making patriotic speeches, urging all who were able, to volunteer for one year service in the Confederate army. Men and boys were meeting at various places for training and drill with whatever provisions and equipment they could muster or improvise.

At the same time a heated campaign for county and state officers was being waged. This campaign was in the main, a contest between the Cooperationists and the Secessionists. What bitterness and feelings that had not already been stirred amongst the citizens through the mis-

takes already committed were stirred through the accusations of both sides in regard to the designs and intentions of the other.

The Secessionists, Rebels they had come to be, were very incriminating in their affirmation that a vote for any candidate who opposed the war was a traitor's act, and that such persons should be dealt with as enemies to the common cause. Those accusations, in turn, gave their opponents a basis for contending that the spirit of the war was wrong — that their motives were selfish and that they were not fighting for the people of the South but for the favored few who were prompting the war.

The Secessionists won over their opponents, where they had such in most all the State. The one exception was in the hills of North Alabama. Here the feelings were still strong in opposition to the seceded State. In response to this feeling the people defied every threat. Candidates openly announced their opposition and promised to respect the wishes of their constituents if elected. In several of the hill counties of the State most of those elected were opposed to the war.

This was especially true in Winston County, where Christopher C. Sheets had been overwhelmingly elected on the promise of his boldness to go back to Montgomery and fight for the rights of his people.

As enrolling officers made their rounds in this section, soliciting volunteers, the young men not only refused to go to the army but also cursed them and bemeaned them as meddlers, and threatened them if they came back. Many refused to go on the account of its being a "Rich man's war and a poor man's fight."

In order to prevent the personal hatred and enmity among the neighbors, it was decided that it would be

better to get officers from other parts of the State to come there and enroll those who were able to fight and arrest those who would not go or those who continued to talk against their efforts. When strangers were brought into the hills for this purpose, however, they met with the same opposition and lack of success. Some were even more resentful of them for coming there and trying to force them into the war.

In vain did those handling the situation try to work out some methods of inducing the people of their section to go to the war without having to force them.

And the Confederate Congress was considering the passing of a conscription act to force the people to join the forces. This, too, was the cause of bitter resentment. Some vowed that even then, they would not go to war, but would hide out and shoot every man that tried to arrest them.

Hardships and sufferings already caused by seeing the young men leave their homes were added to by the actions on the part of those who favored the war in boycotting the others in every way possible. They refused to accommodate the Tories, ridiculed them, made light of them and even failed to sell them the necessities of life or to do any work for them at any price.

The fear of an immediate invasion of the Yankees into Alabama and Tennessee was sufficient to incite many who had declared that they would not go to the army, to change their minds and volunteer for duty. This fear, together with the influence of certain outstanding leaders, was evidenced when they appealed to the people for them to rally in defense of their homes.

Christmas came, emphasizing the realities of the war much more vividly than had been realized before. The

people of the hills were very close to each other and sympathetic with those who suffered. They freely shared the griefs and sorrows with those who had sons or fathers away from them in the service. Other homes were being broken by those leaving. Mothers were weeping, fathers were sad at the sight of their going away.

The enrolling officers had promised some that if they would volunteer they would be allowed to come home for Christmas. This was fully expected by both the parents and those in camp. When those who had been given such promises were not allowed to come back it was a cause of much misgivings toward the Confederacy and it also filled those who had persuaded their sons to go, with bitterness and hatred toward the enrolling officers.

Some who were permitted, or ran away from the army to be with their people, brought back with them weird tales of suffering and deprivations in the camps and in the army where the fighting had taken place.

Neighbors went for miles to see those who had been so far away and to hear them tell their stirring tales of their struggles between life and death. The cruelties of the Confederate officials and their lack of provisions necessary for their comforts or even their existence was a source of greater complaint than the experiences with the Yankees.

Joe Weatherford of Marion County had been killed in Virginia — when his mangled body was returned for burial and the story of his death told, it upset the whole populace into a revolting mob.

Stories were told of the lack of hospitals and doctors to care for the sick and wounded, presenting a distressing, revolting scene.

To get the people of the hills to go to training for war was little less than a sentence to death. It took almost as

much force to get one to go and caused almost as much concern as if he had been sentenced by the courts and hanged. Many who otherwise might have been induced to go to war were completely hardened by such reports till they vowed that they would die before they would leave their homes to fight in the "Rich Man's War."

Chapter VII

CHERRY COMES HOME CHRISTMAS

Cherry's mother had stayed on with her daughter only long enough to see her comfortably settled. Sincy had been allowed to come to stay with Cherry and continue to be her maid. Now, just before Christmas the two girls had returned home — Zeb, the team-man, had gone to Decatur for them.

Cherry's father was away from home on an important business trip for the Confederacy. She missed him but was, nevertheless, delighted to be back home for a visit.

Most of her talk was about her trip home, however, and the stop-over visit in the home of her roommate, Adelle McDowell. She had met Marcus McDowell, the twin brother of Adelle — a clever chap, full of fun. He had never had a worry. His father had tried to get him to go to school, but he preferred the ease, comfort and luxuries of his fine home too much to be away.

When her father finally returned home, Cherry was anxious to tell him of her experiences, knowing he would be delighted with what she had learned about the war and the discussions which they had in school about how they might help in the conflict.

"Pappa," she introduced the subject, "do you know Major William McDowell, of Decatur?"

"No, Cherry. I have never met Major McDowell," he said. "I have heard and read a lot about him, though. Mr. McDowell has not lived there long."

"Adelle, his daughter, told me that they moved from South Carolina two years ago," Cherry agreed. "He is such a lovely man and has the most gorgeous home."

"He is a very wealthy man and will do a lot for our country in this conflict, I am sure, Cherry. I am happy that you have had an invitation to visit in their home and to meet their family."

"Oh, Pappa, I loved it! They are so nice and Mark is so funny — I don't see how Adelle can stay away from a brother like that!"

"Sure, you will always be meeting fine and lovely people like that in the cities," her father confided.

"I want to have the young folks from around here with us sometime while I am home," went on Cherry.

A look of askance displayed nervously on her father's face. "It looks like we are going to be pretty busy as it is. We will perhaps be going away for a visit while you are here."

"But, Pappa, I have already told some of the girls and boys around that I wanted them to come some night for a candy breaking," the girl protested disappointedly.

"Cherry, that will have to depend on how long our invited guests remain with us. I am sure they will be with us till after Christmas Day."

"But, could we not have them together with our other visitors?"

"Cherry," he said firmly, "perhaps I have waited long enough to tell you that in a time like this we must learn to be very distinguishing in our associates. With the division, dissension and feelings which prevail among many of our people around here it appears that we must choose our associates from other places in order to retain

our congeniality, and spare ourselves the embarrassment which some would want to cause. You see — most of those about us are opposed to our slavery and they refuse to assist us in the struggle to withstand the forces of the Yankee oppression that would destroy our society and ruin our country for life. They not only refuse to fight for the Confederacy — they are even in sympathy with our enemies. Honestly I fear that in the face of such opposition, it would be better to detach ourselves from them completely. Even the youngsters, because it will certainly do them no good seeing their fathers are arrayed against us as they are."

"But you would not care if I invited some of them, would you?" the girl pleaded.

"It would be all right if you invited the Noles, Davis and Ireland children. Still, I think that with the others who are to visit with us you will be occupied with entertaining them."

Cherry could see that it was clearly a matter of her father's wanting to avoid having the children of those who had so opposed the struggle in which he was now engaged to preserve their society. She realized, too, because of the patriotic speeches she had heard at school, that it was at least her lot to cooperate with her father in this way. She dropped the subject and went to answer the call of her mother who had asked her to come and assist with the holly and mistletoe which the colored hands had brought for decoration.

By Christmas Eve all the guests had come except Colonel Phillip D. Roddy and his family from Moulton. Mr. Parker and R. W. Walker of Jasper were discussing the delay of Roddy with much apprehension.

"Roddy has been mighty busy in these parts all the winter. Trying to raise a large cavalry to help General Johnson before them Yankees strike into Tennessee. There is a lot of hatred for Roddy around here, too; we can't tell — it's possible some of them Tories in around Houston or Looney's Tavern might have waylaid him and shot the whole family," opined Judge Parker.

"We have just about done away with the opposition in Walker County. Still have just a little resistance in the southwest corner on the line of Marion. I'll tell you, Parker — if we're going to have to fight our own folks before we can carry on this war in a creditable way we had just as well start now to do it. I'd say we'll have a conscription act passed as soon as Congress can get together. Then we ought to be able to take care of this bunch of Tories that's good for nothing but to hamper our efforts in this war," observed Mr. Walker candidly.

Their conversation was interrupted by the arrival of Roddy and his family. It was already dark and the weather was extremely cold. Mr. Roddy offered his apologies for their tardiness and after warming themselves for some time by the huge crackling fire he and his family went to the elaborate and well-prepared supper, along with the rest of the guests and their host, somewhat delayed, waiting their arrival.

The young folks at the party were enjoying a game of candy-breaking and their hearty laughter belied the seriousness of the situation confronting them and their country.

A light snow had been falling since soon after dark and now had placed a generous sheet of white over the frozen ground. It was now snowing fast. The conversation was

turning to the prospects of hazardous and treacherous weather before it ended.

Some of the young folks had already grown tired of the fun of candy-breaking. They had selected their partners and were moving in the direction of the guest chamber, where the beds had been dismantled and moved out in preparation for the square dance.

At this point the attention of all present was arrested by a loud, blunt knock on the front door.

Mrs. Parker arose to answer. Cherry had returned to the room for a chair for the musician. She had heard the knock as she came through the hallway and skipped to the door much as though she knew the caller. No one present though, could have been more surprised than she when she opened the door — there stood Bill Walker. He managed a smile as he stood on the porch shivering from the bitter wind which whipped his coat from around him. He held out to Cherry a good-sized cedar chest.

"This is for your Christmas present, Cherry," he said as though he had almost forgotten his well-thought-out speech of presentation. His eyes carefully surveyed Cherry from head to foot as she stood in the door with her beautiful hoop-skirt swaying about her.

"I am sorry to be bringing it to you so late, but I made it and it took till late to get it finished," Bill exclaimed apologetically.

"Thank you so much, Bill! It's wonderful!" the girl cried happily. She was not exaggerating, either. Bill was a good workman with his hands and like his father, he took a great deal of personal pride in every piece of work he did. He had sawed the planks from a dead, seasoned cedar and had fitted them together with expert craftsmanship. Even the brass hinges which Bill had made himself

were unique in quality. The hand-carvings on the sides and top of the chest were superior.

"Won't you come in?" Cherry invited graciously.

"No — no thank you," Bill had to force himself to say no. His eyes surveyed her again. They came finally to look directly into Cherry's. There was a look of sadness in his eyes, as much as there was happiness and joy expressed in the beautiful eyes of Cherry's. Bill looked at his soiled muddy shoes with the snow packed on the soles and his trousers far too short to cover his tall, manly frame. He turned and walked back toward the gate, feeling very lonely.

Everyone exclaimed over Cherry's lovely gift — but her father and mother were displeased — for Bill Walker was the son of Jack Walker — "the enemy."

There was dancing — and finally, quite late, many of the guests left, though not all, despite the weather.

* * *

The following morning the sun shone brightly on a deep snow. The guests who had remained were preparing to leave for their homes. Mr. R. W. Walker and Colonel Roddy were persuading Mr. Parker to go with them on a trip to Montgomery, on important business in behalf of the Confederacy.

Judge Parker, however, refused. "I am sorry, but I couldn't think of leaving right now," he said. "Mr. Walker, who has already reared a family of fine children can vouch for what I say. There are times in the lives of our young ones when we must be very attentive toward them in our fatherly guidance and council in order to keep them going in the ways we have planned for them and to prevent their becoming victims of their own sympathies."

The carriages were waiting at the gate for the Walker and Roddy families to make their departure for their homes. It had been a pleasant visit in the home of the Parkers.

* * *

In order to keep Cherry from seeing Bill Walker again and having anything to do with him, Cherry's mother and father decided to take her back to Huntsville sooner — taking a roundabout route and visiting at friends on the way — and finally, was back at school. And while Cherry wondered at the strange attitude of her parents, she could not be quite sure. Still — she had a very good idea.

Once his daughter was safely back at school — Judge Parker returned home and turned his mind to fond thoughts — thoughts of buying Jack Walker's place, with the hope that Bill's folks would move from the State.

Chapter VIII

WAR COMES TO ALABAMA

The year, 1862, presented a dark and foreboding picture. War clouds hung low and heavy. The war had already wrought its dissension and demoralizing effects among the people. Those of the hills of North Alabama now realized that the die had been cast. All hopes of those who had sought to divert the State of Alabama from the path of war were gone. Any doubt of the intentions of the Federal armies to come into every State in the Confederacy was erased. They were engulfed in a torrid conflict from which they had no chance of escape. Now they knew that their only chance of staying out of the war was a personal one, and depended upon their own personal initiative and ability to hide or provide means of deception that would conceal them from the search of the enrolling officers.

The battle of Virginia had apparently been won by the Confederate armies. Yet, not without much loss both in men and implements of war. It was a lull before the storm. The Yankees were getting ready for their march against Richmond. The Confederates knew that they must be prepared to defend their capital at all costs. By spring the Federals would be ready to attack Alabama on all sides.

The people of Marion and Winston Counties had not recovered from the shock of the tragic death of Joe

Weatherford and the capture of Mort, his brother, until their passions were fired anew by the news of the death of Prentis Terrel, son of Judge Terrel of Pikesville in Marion County. If the occasion of the death of Joe Weatherford had been bad, the report of the death of Terrel, and the fact that he could not even be brought back home for burial was worse in the proportion of the two tragedies being worse than one.

The Federal armies were poised on the borders of Tennessee, just waiting for winter to break before they started their march into the State from all sides. General Albert Sydney Johnson still sought men and supplies to build his army large enough to repel them. Despite the efforts of those throughout the north part of the State to induce men to go in defense of their sister state, many of them betook themselves to the woods and mountains and hid out.

Phillip D. Roddy had managed to assemble and train a fairly large cavalry. They were ready to join General Johnson at his command. These men were not kept together all the time, and on account of expense and lack of facilities needful to care for them, they were allowed to stay at their own homes and come at intervals for training. This was an added cause for worry and resentment among the peoples of the hills, because many of them were resentful toward those who would not go to the war. Sometimes they incited fights and disturbances by their practices of threatenings and intimidations.

The first of the bi-annual sessions of the State Legislature met in Montgomery the last of January for the purpose of enacting compulsory conscription laws for Alabama. At this meeting Chris Sheets was in the limelight

again, doing his bit as representative from Winston County.

Even before the Legislature convened, Chris was questioned regarding his views and intentions.

"I am in direct opposition to you fellows," he asserted boldly, "and this time you aren't going to keep me quiet when I want to speak!"

He tried his best to address the assembly on his views opposing the general conscription act — but they expelled him from the Legislature for disloyalty, arrested him for treason, and threw him once more into jail with threats on his life this time.

When the news of this latest unjust treatment of their representative reached the people of Chris' county, their resentment rose higher than ever. Many who had never owned guns before in their lives now began to buy them in preparation to organize an army to march on the Capital and demand the release of Chris. Their contempt became so great that, for a time, the enrolling officers had to leave that section or they might have been killed.

The Confederate Government had called upon Alabama for eleven regiments of troops. The State Legislature in turn passed the conscription act requiring all able-bodied males between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five to enroll in the service of the Confederacy. There were certain exemptions allowed under this act which provoked the enmity of the hill people who had few or no slaves. The act allowed for the exemption of those who had twenty or more slaves. It also allowed for the exemption of those in certain kinds of industry and occupations.

Those opposed to the conscription now had a concrete argument that it was "A rich man's war and a poor man's fight."

On February 6th, the Federals captured Ft. Henry, on the Tennessee River near the Tennessee and Kentucky line and the same day Commander Phelps, with four gunboats sailed up the river toward Florence, Alabama. He reached Florence on February 8th, and after capturing two steamers and burning Confederate stores and supplies, he left within a few hours and sailed back toward Ft. Henry. This was the first time that the Yankees had touched Alabama. But it brought to their views plainer than ever the stern realities of the war. The people in most sections began to see the need of a large army in order to protect their State and their homes from the invading Yankees. This in turn, caused some of those in the hills to report to General Bragg and General Johnston.

Fort Donaldson was captured by the Yankees on February 16th. From here General Johnston and his army were compelled to retreat. They went to Corinth, Mississippi, where they were joined by Captain Roddy and his cavalry.

Another law passed by the State Legislature was the "Impressment Act," permitting the officers of the Confederate Government to confiscate either property, such as — wagons, carriages, horses, mules, food-stuffs, or even the slaves and impress them into the Confederate service. For such property they were to give certificates and keep records showing the amount and value of such property. This law and the officers who tried to execute it, were looked upon as agents of tyranny. Those too old or physically unfit for service were affected by them. The people of the hill section who had accepted the previous laws of the Confederate States were much opposed to this.

They regarded this as robbery and an excuse for those who wanted to, to take things selfishly.

* * *

Judge Parker was rapidly becoming known throughout the Confederacy as one of both economic and executive ability, and so great demands were made for his time and council. But he was perplexed — he had too much on his mind. He was fighting a war within himself far more perplexing to him than the "Slave War." He knew his daughter, Cherry, received letters from Bill Walker — and she had accepted his gift. He did not like that in the least — for Bill was one of the enemy, just as his father was.

He must not allow them to ever get to see each other again. What if Cherry came back home — and met Bill? Or Bill left his home and went to Huntsville?

"I'll get Jack's place," Parker decided. "Then they'll have to move — and I won't have to worry any more about Bill and Cherry getting together!" He felt better with that decision made. "Yes," he told himself, "I'll pay Jack twice the worth of his place if only he'll sell — and I think he will, for he's badly in need of money!"

Early the next morning he headed for Jack's place, his mind busily engaged in thinking out various plans to get his own way in this matter.

A great surprise was in store for him when he came in sight of the house. Something which he had never dreamed of was taking place. He stopped and watched for a moment, to assure himself that what he was seeing was not a mistake. Jack had his wagon backed against the front door and he and his family were loading their house-things on to move.

His first joy at discovering Jack was moving was shadowed by the question of where Jack was going. He must know that. Jack might be moving far — or perhaps just a short distance away.

Jack was now yoking his steers and leading them toward the wagon. His wife was placing the children on top of the things. Judge Parker saw Bill, a huge chunk of a young man with powerful arms and broad shoulders, stride from the house. Bill was ramming a bullet in the muzzle of the old hog-rifle as he came from the door.

Parker was tempted to turn back, but realized they had already seen him coming.

"Howdy, Judge," Bill said good-naturedly.

"Good morning, Bill. Good morning, Jack and Ida." Mr. Parker spoke softly.

Jack looked over his oxen. That was the first he had known of Parker's presence. Jack stopped what he was doing and stood silently, resting his hand on the end of the yoke. He looked at the Judge somewhat at a loss, waiting for him to speak and state his business.

"Umpf!" coughed the Judge, "Jack, would you sell me your place, since you are moving away?"

After a moment of consideration, Jack replied in a quiet, firm voice, "No."

"I'll give you twice the worth of it, if you'll sell it to me," persisted Parker.

Jack didn't answer. He was now at the front of the wagon ready to climb in.

"I'll give you a thousand dollars and your debt," Parker spoke again.

Jack looked scornfully at the man then turned and looked at Bill, who was ramming the bullet into the gun.

For a second he seemed to be studying the gun in Bill's hand and Parker grew apprehensive. Jack's lips twitched. He turned his eyes toward the ground, grasping the side of the wagon-bed, and breathed a low prayer, "God help!"

Judge Parker moved quickly around to the other side of the wagon.

Jack climbed onto the wagon and turned to his visitor.

"Judge," he said in a firm voice, "our country is ruined. I am a ruined man. You have wrecked me. No, Judge, I won't sell you my place at any price — not for twice your offer. I am moving away — that is what you want. That ought to satisfy you."

Parker looked up. Tears were coming into the eyes of Jack's wife.

Jack continued. "I am sure that neither of us will live to enjoy this land again. Still, I have a right to leave this here for my children. Maybe these little ones will be spared. God grant that they may claim it in a day when all men may live here in peace and be equal!"

As Jack settled himself on the wagon, Mr. Parker turned and walked slowly away.

* * *

Others were also moving away as things grew ever more unbearable. Rebels were going about here and there, snatching, grabbing everything they could get their hands on, arresting everybody who wouldn't go and help them fight the Yankees.

John Phillips and his wife were disturbed, nay, disgusted. The privacy and decency of their home was being violated all the time. It was turned into a public place night after night — men came along, claiming to be

soldiers and robbed — stole all they could take away with them.

It was early in the morning. A crowd had spent most of the night in the Phillips' house. No one had slept. The whole place was in an upheaval. The big pile of wood that John had stacked in the corner of the room was gone. Piles of sweet-potato peelings were scattered all over the floor. The visitors had taken what he thought must have been the last sweet potato from the cellar and wasted and messed them over the floor.

"Mahala," he said to his wife softly as the two of them sat nervously beside the fireplace, "we can't put up with this any longer. We are moving back in the cove today."

"I dread moving back there in them chills and that fog," sighed his wife, "but — that home at least won't be so convenient for the Rebel soldiers passing through."

* * *

The terrible battle of Richmond was being fought. Dozens of regiments of infantry and cavalry from Alabama were taking part in the desperate struggle. News which came from the war painted a grim picture. It was not hard to see that the worse the fighting became and the nearer the war came to their homes, the greater would be the pressure to force everyone into the war.

On the sixth of April, General Albert S. Johnston, with a large force of Confederates was marching from Corinth, Mississippi to Shiloah, where a big Federal army was assembled at Pittsburgh Landing on the Tennessee River. Throughout the afternoon the battle raged with the Federals being pushed steadily back toward the bank of the river. During the afternoon the Confederates sustained a great tragedy and one of demoralizing effect. General

Johnston had been wounded. He was taken from the fighting and his injury concealed as long as possible.

General Beauregard accepted his command and the fighting continued with the Federals losing. General Johnston died during the night. It was thought that sure victory would crown the efforts of the Confederates. The fighting stopped for the night with the Yankees hemmed close beside the river bank. During the night huge gunboats were moved from Savannah, bringing thousands of men and arms under the command of General Buel, into position along the banks of the Pittsburgh landing. At dawn on April the seventh, a mighty blast of the cannons, loaded with log-chains and all kinds of shrapnel was hurled at the Confederates. They soon lost so many men, killed and injured, that the tide turned and the battle was won as a complete victory for the Yankees.

Generals Bragg and Beauregard saved as many of their men as they could by a retreat back to Corinth. Captain Roddy and part of his cavalry had served as General Bragg's personal escorts. A few days later the battle of Corinth was fought with the Federals again victorious. These victories then left the beautiful Tennessee Valley and north Alabama and Mississippi open to the Yankees. The Federals moved in, destroying the Memphis and Charleston Railroad and launching raids into the hills and small towns throughout the country. These raids were the cause of consternation in the hearts of the people. War had now come to the hills of Alabama in dread earnest. At the same time reports were growing that Woodruff Miles, of the southern part of Walker and Marion Counties, had succeeded in getting a large number of recruits who were ready to join the Federal army.

General Bragg raised Phillip D. Roddy to the rank of Colonel and sent him to north Alabama to defend the section against the Yankees and the Tories, who were making for the Federal army. Here Roddy was called upon for far more duties and responsibilities than he or any other would have been able to perform.

Reports had it that Miles, who had gone to the Federal army in 1861, had been sent back to get as many of his neighbors as he could to go to the Yankees, was now getting a force large enough to prevent the enrolling officers from inducting any into the services. They were also threatening to tear down the jails where those who would not join the army were being held, and were threatening the impressment officers for taking the property of those of his section.

Roddy and Brewer, another cavalry leader of north Alabama, had to call upon the people who were left to form cavalry and home-guard brigades to defend the section against the Tories and to assist in getting the men to the armies. Reports were prevalent that several men, who had joined the Confederate army and had taken part in the battles of Virginia and Shiloah had deserted from the forces and were now hiding in the hills. Some had joined the Tories and were now wanting to go to the Federal lines. These home-guards were also asked to help in searching for those who were hiding and to help in bringing them to the places of induction. They, too, were to assist in taking supplies which the impressment officers had been denied and threatened for taking.

General Q. M. Mitchell with a large force of Yankees, marched in and captured Huntsville on April 11th. The town had been able to resist the Yanks for only a short

time. With the capture of this place the Federals were in command on both sides of north Alabama. They were ready to launch full scale attacks against the Confederates along the Tennessee River. In addition to the loss of the town of Huntsville, the Rebels had lost large stores of locomotives and supplies. To the people of Alabama the presence of the Yankees so close meant that all efforts for the raising of an army and the protection of their homes would have to be redoubled.

News of the capture of Huntsville was most depressing to the Confederate States and especially to the people of Alabama. Among those worst disturbed over the fall of Huntsville were those who had children in the school there. Mr. and Mrs. Parker were almost panic-stricken when the news reached them. They had in no means been prepared for such a blow. They had never even suspected that the Yankees were near the place. Fear that Cherry might have been wounded or even killed seized them. They could not find out about the damage done to the city. They didn't know but that the Yanks had shelled the city to ruins.

"Don't worry, dear," Judge Parker tried to soothe his wife, "I'll go at once and find out — and try to bring Cherry back. I am sure she must have gone some place to safety."

Mrs. Parker was so upset she took to her bed and her husband, with Zeb, hurried away late in the afternoon of April 12th. It was a precarious ride. At Moulton, additional news of the capture of Huntsville was learned. It was even worse than they had heard so far — and Mr. Parker's fears grew so that he was almost on the verge of despair. They drove through the whole night as fast as the team could travel.

On the afternoon of the next day they were surprised beyond words to meet the McDowells, except Major McDowell, in their large carriage with Cherry, fleeing from the town of Decatur.

"Oh, I'm so glad to see you safe, daughter!" cried the Judge, holding Cherry close in his arms. "Tell me all about it!"

She and the McDowells told him. They had left the town only a few hours before the Yankees had marched in that day. They had persuaded Major McDowell as best they could to come with them but he refused. He wanted to stay and beg the Yankees to spare the town.

Major McDowell had gotten word of the advance of the Yanks and had gone to Huntsville for Adelle, his daughter, and Cherry, just as the first cannons began to hurl their balls into the city. It was a daring break. A few hours later and they would have been captured and put under military rule.

They had now been on their way to Winston County to escape capture.

* * *

The Parkers and McDowells had hardly gotten to Brown Creek Bottom before news reached them that the Yanks had captured Tuscumbia on April the 16th. They knew that the worst of the whole war was upon them. Something had to be done.

Mr. Parker was excited about the war. More than he had been at any time. He wanted to get busy and help the home-guards to see that every person who was able was in the war. Something had to be done quickly. The Yanks would soon capture the whole State.

Roddy was in Mississippi trying to keep the Yanks from entering Alabama on the western side. He could not come to engage the Yanks in the Tennessee Valley. They were getting ready now to make their raids in every town and village of the section. Every man must do his part.

Chapter IX

THE TORY, REBEL STRUGGLE

Bill Looney had become a valuable asset to the men of his section, even though he had no particular understanding with the Yankees which would permit him and his company to enter their lines without being shot. He had traveled the country over and knew exactly how to go in order to surround the mountains and ravines. He also knew when he and men with him were getting near any road or houses where pickets and home-guards might be stationed.

So it was that Bill Looney acted as guide and escort for men wanting to get through to the Yankees at times. Bill led the way unfailingly — spoke the proper countersign, and he and the men he had escorted were passed through the lines — then taken to headquarters, and from there, allowed to go north to work in the factories and hospitals, or to stay and help in hauling supplies and arms to the soldiers as they chose.

General Dodge was pleased and commended Looney for his scouting men to the Yanks.

"Bring as many as want to come," he said. "I'll be glad to equip all who come with guns and horses to fight against the Confederate cavalry and home-guards."

Looney smiled and nodded his head. "Glad to bring you all I can," he said. "And, there's plenty!"

He headed back home the following afternoon to scout others through who wanted to go, and had reached the

mountain several miles south of Tuscumbia and was looking for shelter to rest for the night when, "Halt! Hands up!" a gruff voice startled him.

Looney knew he'd been sighted by Reb pickets. He didn't dare reach for his gun under his coat, realizing he was already covered.

A moment later and a big, gruff-looking fellow walked out from behind some green bushes, his gun leveled, hammer cocked.

Looney waited nervously, but appearing calm outwardly. Several other men now converged from all directions.

Bill Looney gave an exclamation of surprise as he recognized the leader of the group, Tobe Gibson — Tobe was a leader of the home-guards, a despised one. The man glowered at Looney.

"We're onto your da—— tricks!" Tobe cursed and motioned for one of the men to search Bill. "You've been to scout a bunch of da—— Tories to the Yankees! We'll stretch yer da—— rusty neck for it, too!"

"Fine pistol," the searcher declared, turning Bill's gun, which he had found, in careful examination. "Wish we could ketch a whole bunch of them Tories just for their guns, if we could always do this well!"

A few moments later Bill Looney, with his hands tied behind him, was being marched toward the camp at the old La Grange College place on La Grange Mountain, near the line of Franklin County. It was a hard struggle for the prisoner, trying to climb the mountain and walk through the brush with his hands tied. But he knew better than to try to make a break for freedom, realizing his

captors were just looking for an excuse to shoot and kill him.

Camp was finally reached and here Bill Looney was turned over to Captain A. A. Russel and Captain Lemuel G. Mead, leaders of the Partizan Rangers in north Alabama. They looked him over and grunted.

"He's too old and small for service in the army," concluded Russel, "we'll send him to Richmond or Charleston for camp duty."

For the time being it was decided to imprison Looney in an old log stable with three other prisoners, Tories who had been captured during the day. The door of the stable was nailed and a guard was placed to watch the prisoners throughout the night.

It was already growing dark, but Looney immediately set about trying to discover a means of escape, for his spirit was dauntless. Before long he found the feed trough, made of a half of a hollow log with the ends trimmed to fit in the cracks between the logs — he discovered it was loose and could be moved by pulling one end around. One of the other men, on learning the trough was loose immediately wanted to start using it in an attempt to escape, but Bill grabbed him by the hand and shook him vigorously.

"Wait until later when the guard is tired, when the fire has gone out. Then the guard will likely be asleep or almost so, and we can get away under cover of darkness!"

The other prisoners saw the sense of Bill Looney's argument and were content to look to him for leadership and wait.

Toward the middle of the night the fire had burned low. The guard had grown tired and had quit searching

for more sticks to keep the fire blazing. Crouching close to the wall they could see him through a crack and hear his snores. He was asleep on the job. Now was the time to escape, if ever.

The prisoners dragged the end of the trough around far enough to give them all the chance they needed. They had a pry-pole but no fulcrum.

Bill gave orders to the largest man in the crowd to get on his hands and knees and let the others use him for a block to pry on. It was a strange means but it could do the trick. They placed the trough on the man's hips and with two of the men pulling down on the trough they were able to pry the corner of the stable up enough for Bill to slip the end of a log out. With the log moved, they were able to crawl through and soon all were outside and temporarily free at any rate.

Now they had to escape from the vicinity of the camp itself, and to do this they crawled for a long way on their hands and bellies.

* * *

The peace and quiet which John Phillips had wished he might have by moving back into his "Cove" home was short-lived. The fighting was becoming too severe and too much of the State was falling into the hands of the Yankees for anyone that was able to be left out of the service. John had worked in his field hard all day. About ten o'clock that night he was awakened by a bunch of Rebel home-guards.

"Hey, John, hey John!" they shouted at the top of their voices. "Git up from thar, John! We want you to go with us and help us arrest a bunch of Tories!"

"Come outa thar, John! We're gonna make a soldier outa you!" others shouted and banged on the walls of the house.

John, with a groan, rolled out of bed, where his wife and two small children had been sleeping with him.

"Ye better git yer britches on, John," came the heckling voices. "Ye don't wanta go out without yer britches!"

John could hardly restrain himself from using his musket, but realized the foolishness of trying resistance. He slid into his trousers and pulled one gallus on his shoulder as he went to the door and opened it a little.

"Come on, John; get your shoes on, lessen you wanta go barefooted," voices from without continued to tantalize him.

"Say, men," he protested mildly, "I've worked hard all day and I am a tired man. I need to rest. Won't you let me alone for the night?" he tried to reason.

It was useless. The men didn't want to listen to reason.

"John, we've come to get you to go with us to arrest a bunch of these moss-backs around here!" John recognized the voice of Tobe Gibson. "If ye don't go with us, we're a-gonna arrest you with the bunch and take ye along with us. We'll see that you are in the army purty quick if you don't go."

John argued no further. He turned to get his well-worn home-made shoes, remembering how tired he had been when he had pulled them off.

A large stick of wood banged against the wall.

"Them da—— Rebels!" he said in a muffled tone, "I've a good mind to kill every man I can manage to shoot this very night! I wish the Yankees would kill every

last one of them before they have a chance to do any more of their devilment!"

"Get your gun, John! May need it if any of these Tories get tough with us around here," Gibson warned.

John reached up over his front door for his muzzle-loader, wishing he could use it that very minute on the lewd, repulsive crowd.

He kissed his wife and children goodbye and slipped out to join the night prowlers. Some of them were drunk, others were drinking and talking about where they could get more whiskey. But they watched John to see he didn't slip away.

"On to Charlie Cagle's home!" Tobe shouted.

They slipped up to Charlie Cagle's home and scared his wife and children into hysteria. Charlie was not there. The men were coarse and abusive because she could not tell them where he was. Gibson set three men to watch the house throughout the night and catch Charlie if he came in — then the group went on to Anson Hyde's place. By this time the men were hungry and grabbed anything they could find in the gardens and fields to eat.

The same scene was enacted here — and then the crowd went on to Alex Underwood's place. Alex had become one of the induction officers of east Marion County. The men were still boisterous. On their way they met up with another group of home-guards who had caught other Tories, who were lying out, and were driving them along the road, tied together like beasts.

"Quiet, men, hush!" Gibson commanded his noisy bunch as they came near Underwood's house. He didn't want their rowdy talk and action to continue.

"Mr. Underwood!" he called. "Alex, hey Alex!" He went on the porch calling.

The men roamed about, some lay down to rest, for all were tired and exhausted.

Finally the door opened slightly and Underwood spoke. "What is it, men?" he asked.

"Alex, we've got a bunch of Tories here and we want you to fix papers for them. We want to get them in the army," Gibson informed.

"Wait till I make a light," Underwood requested.

While he was lighting a candle there was some discussion between Gibson and Ham Carpenter, leaders of the other bunch of home-guards, as to which would get to go in first and enroll their men. By the time Underwood had a light they were already shoving the men into his room.

"Let's see," he pondered in somewhat legal approach, "who've you got, men?" He shaded his eyes with his hand trying to recognize the men brought in by the home-guards.

"John Phillips and Anson Hyde," Gibson volunteered in a half-arrogant tone as though he were deriving some self-esteem from being the one instrumental in bringing the Tories for induction.

Carpenter started to name his men he had brought along when he was interrupted by Underwood.

"Well, well, men," he spoke apologetically, turning in recognition of Phillips and Hyde. He hesitated, deliberating for a moment. "Friends," he said finally, "it does seem a bit severe when one is compelled to execute the authority of his office, when those of his very best friends are involved. However, we are all aware of our pressing need for men at this time. The honor and duties of my office obligates me to preceed with the issuing of papers which will declare you men conscripts of the Confederate

army, according to the duly constituted authority of the State of Alabama."

He then turned to Tobe Gibson. "On second thought, however, Gibson, we know that there is no need of taking Phillips and Hyde on to the army. I know both of them. They are both responsible men. I can vouch for them. They'll be glad to do what's right. All we've got to do is call them." He turned to the men and said, "I am going to let you both sign tonight and then I am going to let you go on a furlough and get ready to report for induction by the first of May of this year."

It was a welcome reprieve for both Phillips and Hyde, and they both signed, happy to get the extension of time before having to report.

Not everyone got off so easily, however.

An atrocious murder was reported shortly after. It was considered the worst crime of all the war, and one that filled the hearts of the people with a spirit of vengeance and hatred. The father and brother of Bird Norris had gone to Jasper to see about him, to find him gone from the jail. They searched about the town for almost two days before finding him, dead — his body thrown in a ditch. He had been taken from the jail at the end of five days because he refused to join the Confederacy. A toe-sack had been drawn over his head and he had been shot. Seven bullet-holes were counted between the cross of his galluses.

This was almost enough to compel the mossbacks to come forth from their hidings and start a march on the home-guards. Men throughout the country who had been in sympathy with the Confederacy were bitterly disturbed

by it. Others swore that they would kill every home-guard they saw.

* * *

Back at the Parker home things were sadly different. Cherry was very lonesome. Her father was gone from home most of the time. Most all of the field hands had been impressed into the service of the Confederacy. People were all restricted in their travel, so she could no longer go along with her father. More and more she hated the deprivations imposed by the war.

One afternoon Sincy came running into the room where Cherry sat disconsolate, greatly excited and smiling.

"Sincy!" Cherry cried, "What in the world is the matter? I have never seen you act so beside yourself before!"

Sincy's big eyes were shining. She said in almost a whisper, "Bill — Bill Walker, called to see you, Miss Cherry. He don ax to see you, honey!" Sincy turned and was already on her way to the door, motioning for Cherry to follow her to where Bill was.

"Come in, Mista Bill," Sincy invited.

Bill accepted the invitation readily and entered the hallway when Cherry reached the door.

"Howdy, Cherry!" Bill spoke with a big smile. He held his crumpled hat in both hands nervously.

"Good afternoon, Bill," Cherry returned. "Will you come in?" She had crossed the hallway and was inviting him into the parlor. Then, as Cherry looked over her shoulder she saw Sincy still in a dither as she ran out at the back door.

"Cherry," said Bill earnestly, "I have been so uneasy about you, since I heard about the Yanks capturing

Huntsville. I was anxious to see you. To know if you were safe or if you had been captured."

"We just managed to get out before the Yankees came in," Cherry explained. "We were almost captured again in Decatur."

"I am sure glad you got away safe. I heard that they shelled the town. I was afraid you might be injured. I wanted to come to see you sooner, but we have moved and live so far away now," he apologized.

"Why, where did you move, Bill?" asked the girl interestedly. "Pappa told me that you and your folks had moved, but he didn't say where you had gone."

Big Bill sighed. He was exhausted from the long walk. He turned to sit on the sofa at her nod. "We moved to Clear Creek Falls, in the other side of the county," he told her.

"Howdy, Bill," Mrs. Parker said, surprised to see him and not too well pleased, but bound to be polite nevertheless, for she knew Cherry did think a lot of the boy.

"Good evening, Mrs. Parker," Bill said, bowing politely as he spoke.

"How are your mother and folks?" she continued. "I have been wondering about them."

"They're all all right. I know Mom is mighty lonesome since we moved away from the old home. She doesn't say much about it. But — I know she would like to be back at our home."

"Where did you move to, Bill?" Mrs. Parker continued.

"We moved to Clear Creek Falls. There isn't anyone who lives close to us," Bill was saying. He stopped abruptly as heavy footsteps came on the porch. He appeared uneasy.

"That's Pappa!" Cherry said happily. She was glad he was back home. He had been gone for weeks. But Bill regretted that he should come back just at this time. He picked up his hat, intending to leave, as Cherry ran to greet her father. He heard her say, "Bill's here!" as though she thought he would be glad to receive the news. But the news was anything but welcome to Mr. Parker. He turned into the parlor and confronted Bill.

"Young man," he said sternly in a heavy voice, no smile on his face, "have you had any invitation to come here?"

His voice was assurance to Bill that he was unwelcome — at least by the girl's father. He dropped his head and said humbly, "No — but — I heard that Huntsville was captured and I was anxious to know if Cherry was all right. I — I didn't mean to —"

"Well, we can manage here," Mr. Parker interrupted rudely. "Your interests in the welfare of my family are unappreciated. Moreover, I am sure that it is not for our mutual benefit that you come here."

Bill was hardly able to believe he understood the meaning of the man's terms. But he could tell by his expression and tone that he was indignant about his presence in his home. Awkwardly, he crushed the brim of his hat as he walked from the room and house without saying more.

Cherry looked on sadly, feeling humiliated, and tried to stop him, but her father held out a restraining hand. Tears welled up in the girl's eyes and indignation blazed in the look she cast on her father.

"Pappa, why are you mad at Bill?" she cried as the door closed after her friend.

Her father was tired and worried about the reverses of the war. He looked haggard and worn.

"Cherry!" he spoke half-scoldingly. "Do I have to tell you that Bill Walker is no longer welcome to come to my house — and that I am definitely opposed to your seeing him?"

"But Bill is just like he always has been, isn't he, Pappa? He is not responsible for the war or for his Pa's opposition to the war, is he?"

"Bill is just exactly like his daddy! He's too much of a Tory to fight for our country! He'll see the day, though, when he will be in the army when he's old enough!" came the reply.

"But Bill was only wanting to be kind to us, like he used to be when they lived here," Cherry half-sobbed.

"We will talk no more of this," said her father sternly. "I hope he will not be taking advantage of my being away from home to be coming here again."

He retired to his own room, tired and disturbed, and Cherry slumped in a huge chair and gave way to sobbing. Her mother discreetly retired also and said nothing either in favor or against Bill.

Chapter X

THE CAVALRY RAIDS

There was such a large number of Tories and mossbacks lying out in the hills and caves of Winston, Marion and Fayette Counties, who were encouraged and organized by Bill Looney and Woodruff Miles for raids against the enrolling officers and home-guards, that the efforts of these Confederate officials were becoming less and less effective until there was actual fear among many of them that there would be a large rebellion of the whole section.

The forces of these men lying out were insurmountable obstacles to the officials. They were not only keeping themselves from the services of the Confederacy but were at the same time offering protection to a large number of deserters from the southern armies and were appealing to others in the armies to desert. The presence of the Yankees in the Tennessee Valley, where they were continually launching their raids against every town and community in north Alabama kept the leaders, Meed, Russel, Roddy, and others of the partisan rangers so busy that they no longer had time to help in the recruiting of men and supplies for the armies. So it was necessary for others, mostly old men, to organize cavalry brigades for the defense of the country against the Tories and to force those of military age to enroll for the army.

Stoke Roberts and Jim Beckner were the leaders of these cavalrymen and home-guards in the western part of

Walker County. Al Gibson and Ham Carpenter were in charge of those in the eastern part of Marion. Ben Humphries, Squire Musgrove, and George Harris, were in command of those in the northern part of Fayette. These men, with their followers, usually worked with each other in their raids. This was especially true when raiding in Winston County. They held a meeting at Mitchell's Forte in eastern Marion County, near where the Burleson Road crossed the Buttahatcha River, and decided that because of the dangers to which their lives had been subjected in going to the homes of the Tories or looking for them in their hideouts, they would give a general and final warning making it a capital offense for any man of military age to fail to report for induction into the service of the Confederacy. And that any failing to report within five days after citation was given to them or some member of their family would be shot as traitors to the Confederate Government.

These men and their helpers wasted no time in putting into practice the letter and spirit of this decision. Stuttering Charles Cagle of Marion County, who had been lying out on Buttahatcha River and Wiley Branch, was found lying under a bluff by Gibson and his men and shot. His body was left in the bluff across the river from where the men had found him and riddled his body with bullets. It was said that he was shot by so many big bullets at the same time that he never moved a part of his body.

Ham Carpenter, Stoke Roberts and Al Gibson had sent Wash Curtis word that he had better come to the Mitchell Forte for enrollment by the end of the following week. Wash lived in the eastern part of Winston County, a few miles northwest of Houston, the County Seat on Crooked

Creek. He was at that time serving as County Court Clerk of Winston, under the appointment of his brother, Pink Curtis, who was the probate judge. Wash was a fine specimen of man. He was over six feet tall, sandy-headed and light complexion, and weighed nearly two hundred pounds. He was known throughout the whole section for his jovial personality and was loved by most everyone who knew him. He, together with his beautiful and lovely wife, Ora, and their three young children, composed an ideal, lovely family.

The day for him to report had passed. Wash knew that he would no longer be allowed to continue his freedom in the County; that these men who had sent him the warning would be only too eager to carry out their threat. He knew that they had already boasted that they would rather kill him than catch him.

It was Tuesday morning — and he was to have reported by the night before. He had spent a sleepless night and was planning to ride into the mountains of north Winston to hide or on to the Yankees at Davis' Gap south of Decatur, if he could. His wife had cooked him a big bag of food and prepared clothing and blankets for his trip. The sun was scarcely an hour high when he had his horse saddled, the packs tied on him, waiting at the yard-gate. The Rebs would soon be there he knew — he had to go; he had delayed too long already. But he went back to the porch to kiss his family good-bye.

"Listen!" Ora, his beautiful young wife said, turning pale suddenly. They heard the sound of galloping horses coming across the mountain less than a quarter of a mile from the house.

Wash grabbed the three startled children into his big arms and kissed them passionately. Then, with tears

streaming down his cheeks, he held his wife tenderly and kissed her quivering lips.

"Goodbye Ora. Goodbye babies!" he said, and ran to his horse, leaped into the saddle and started off.

The riders were already at hand, one man in sight.

Wash spurred his horse. The animal whirled about in the direction of the men. Wash reined him viciously. In his panic his spurs went deep into the horse's side. He began to pitch. The men were now coming on at full speed.

Wash turned again for a last look at his wife and children as he tried to get the horse to run. Ora was clutching the facing of the door to keep from falling. Her face was pallid, her eyes strained. A dozen men were racing up. Wash spurred his horse again. He only pitched and bucked.

"Bang! Bang!" Shots were pouring from their guns. Wash's horse lunged forward, slinging Wash's body backward. It rolled off on the left side toward the ground. A terrible cry came from the man's wife but the gang of killers paid no attention to her as they rode on up to see the body sprawled limp on the ground. Wash's clothing and whole right side of his body had been literally torn away by the blasts from their guns.

* * *

It was the last of April — and the time was at hand for the furlough of John Phillips and Anson Hyde to be up. How the men hated the idea of having to go — but they knew it would be no use trying to hide out for they would only be hunted down here and killed as had been many others.

It was hard parting with their families, but they decid-

ed it must be done — and so they set out to join the army, for they were to come by the first day of May.

It was a long, hard trip — Phillips stood it well enough, but Ans got so tired before night that he had to get off his horse and walk. His saddle had rubbed him until he could no longer stay a-straddle of the horse.

They stayed over night at Judge Anderson's place at Good Springs — and when the Judge learned the next morning that they were heading to join Roddy at Glendale, Judge Anderson flushed angrily, for he hated the Confederacy and the Rebels.

"Why don't you go to the Yankees instead?" he said when he learned how the men were being forced into the Rebel army. "You'll be a world safer with them, and just as well thought of as you'll be with them Rebels!"

"Where will we find the Yankees?" Ans wanted to know.

"They are just west of Bear Creek on the Tennessee River," the other told him.

"But we'll get to the Rebs first, won't we?"

"Yes, but our papers say for us to go to Glendale. So they will get us by the Rebs and we can go on to the Yankees."

Ans was giving out from the ride and getting sick. He had the bloody flux and was having to stop every few minutes. Besides his old saddle which he had picked up and fixed for the trip was already rubbing big blisters and patches of skin from his legs.

As they turned west to travel down the M. & C. Railroad, Hyde wanted to know, "Why can't we go and join the Yankees at Tuscumbia, John?"

"Because, you remember, Judge Anderson told us that

they have left Tuscumbia and are now raiding in Mississippi," Phillips reminded him.

The afternoon sun was beaming into their faces. Anson had to stop again. He was weak and nervous. His face was already sunburned.

"John — I can't go on. Let's go back," he begged.

"Ans, what do you mean?" cried Phillips exasperatedly. "Here we are seventy-five miles from home and now you want to start back! First you agree to go on to the Yankees and now you're wanting to go back home," he chided.

They continued to ride forwards and soon met Rebel soldiers and were passed when they showed their papers.

"There is no use to go to Mississippi. Roddy is planning to camp in Cherokee tonight," one of the soldiers informed them.

"These are our military orders," Phillips told them, "and we've got to obey them." They rode on.

"This is killing me!" Anson wailed, getting off his horse again. He had made it well as long as the soldiers were around, but when they were alone he began to get very sick again.

"Come on, Ans," John persuaded him. "We are almost to Chickasaw. The Yanks are just across the river."

"John, I can't go on. I'm not going!" The poor man was crying. John paused to wait on him as he lay down in the road and cried like a child.

"Get up from there, Ans!" John scolded.

"I can't, John! I'm going to lay right here till I die, if you don't go back with me!" wailed the other.

"We can't — I'd just as soon be in torment as with the Rebel devils! Come on — you'll make it and then you

can take it easy!" He could see that his companion was really suffering terribly. That he was a very sick man. Finally, he relented. "I doubt if we'll ever get back through them Rebel pickets," he said, "but I'll try, on one condition — and that is, you let me do the talking and keep your mouth shut!"

"I'll do it, John — anything you say, if you will just go back with me," Hyde promised.

"Here's what we'll do — go on to Chickasaw and get us a sack of salt apiece," outlined John. "Then, if any of the Rebs see us they will think we are farmers in the valley and let us pass."

Anson agreed to this proposal and they went on to buy the salt.

Hyde was feeling better since the evening had cooled and they were on their way toward home again. Then, they came to the first Rebel pickets.

"Halt! Who comes?" came the curt demand.

"Soldiers," Phillips returned. "We belong to Roddy's command."

The two rode on without stopping. They heard the Corporal say, "There is no need to send a guard with these men. They are on their way to the camp."

As they came to the men fixing their camp and cooking supper, in Cherokee, they expected to be halted again. But the men were so busy Phillips and Hyde were surprised to find they were allowed to pass the camp unnoticed.

They knew that they would see more pickets, but that there would be fewer on that side of the camp away from the Yankees. They had almost concluded that they would get by without being halted when they heard a sharp voice a good ways in the distance.

"Halt! Who comes?" It was an unpleasant voice, very unlike the other pickets who had halted them.

"Friends!" Phillips responded without giving the countersign. They had been allowed to pass without hindrance so far. It was not long, though, until they came to a bunch of Rebel soldiers and home-guards driving a bunch of Yankee prisoners.

"Who are you?" one of them demanded as they were riding by.

"Citizens who have been after salt," Phillips spoke.

"Wait there! How do we know but what you are soldiers deserting?" another questioned, walking toward Phillips.

"Look after them Yankees and don't let a one of them get away," Phillips advised.

As he said this, he touched his little mule with his spurs and rode on.

They soon took to the woods to find a place where they could rest and sleep during the night. They hid themselves early the next morning for the day, and the next night made their trip on home.

And here they had to remain in hiding, for their families told them that everyone thought they had gone to join the army — and it would not do to let themselves be seen. They could only expect the same fate meted out to them as to others — the latest of whom was Newt Austin, who had been caught hiding near his house and hung and shot to death.

When word finally reached the officers of Marion County that Phillips and Hyde had failed to report to the army, it was concluded they had gone to the Yankees. So it was the home-guards and cavalry started stealing everything they had. All their hogs, cattle — crop harvest.

And then the home-guards learned that Phillips and Hyde were not in the Yankee army after all, and got an entire regiment of men to go to the cove and stay until they had either caught or killed them both.

For days the houses were watched and the hideaways were without food — finally John Phillips made a desperate try to get into his own house when he thought the vigilance of the guards was relaxed, hoping to get food. But a challenge came from a spy concealed in the bushes near him. He made a wild dash, ran crouched like a turkey for a time — and though a volley of bullets was fired after him he escaped unharmed.

John finally reached the home of Buz and Prudy Tidwell, who had recently moved into that section and there received sanctuary and food and sent word by Prudy to his wife that he was well and safe.

He did not stay long in the house, fearing the Rebels would be along any minute, and so headed for a big Chestnut tree and waited until Prudy could deliver his message and return.

It was a long time before she returned — the soldiers and home-guards saw her and waited all day for her to leave so they could follow her and see if she would lead them to the fugitive.

John had lost Anson Hyde and had to spend the day by himself. It appeared to him in his impatience that Prudy would never get a chance to come back. He knew, however, that the reason for the delay was that his house was under close surveillance.

It was almost night when he finally saw her coming along the road. He could see also a band of armed men following her. John crawled up between two huge rocks.

"Just wait," he said to himself grimly, "if them blasted Rebs come on up close enough, I'll kill the last one of them!"

He placed his gun between the rocks so that when they came to a certain place he could fire into them.

Prudy knew that the men were following her and passed on by without stopping.

Just as the men came into his view between the rocks, he fired, intending to kill any he could. There was an immediate stampede. Prudy hurried back to talk to John and then Anson Hyde, who had heard the gunfire, came slipping up. John in his excitement, threw his gun on Anson. Then he recognized the man.

"Ans Hyde!" he cried, "I almost blowed your brains out!"

"John, thar's a whole regiment of them devils around your house a waitin' like the seven-years-itch to ketch you and Ans!" Prudy began.

"Did you get to bring anything to eat, Prudy?" John asked, more interested in food at the time than anything else. "I'm starved!"

"I've got some," she told him. "But powful little. Shore is about all thar is left on the place." She was pulling a pone of cornbread from her bosom, where she had concealed it from the Rebels. "Them low-down lousy broots have don druv off the last cow you had and killed and carried off the last hog. Mahala said they even killed that old poor sow fore she even weaned her pigs. Besides, they've stole every lastin' bit of your corn and fodder. Why, them cussed Rebs have poured the last gallon of meal on the place out and cut the last middlin' of meat from the smokehouse and put it in the mealsacks to

take it off with them. That ain't all, neither, John — they've robbed and tore up ever bee-gum on the place and got the bees all stirred up ever-where, and they've robbed Mahala's kitchen of the last cup and spoon and fork and saucer she had." Prudy was talking fast.

John had broken the pone of cornbread and handed half of it to Anson. He started to bite it, then stopped, looking at it with a downward cast for several seconds. "I hate to eat it from my children so bad." There were tears starting in his eyes. "Prudy, I want you to go back tomorrow, if you can, and tell Mahala to get Mary Roberts, the girl from across the river, to come and stay with her and the children. I can't stay here any longer. Me and the family both will be better off if I can get completely away for a while. I am going over to see Riley Cole on New River and see if he still wants to slip out to Georgia with me for awhile."

* * *

John Phillips travelled steadily and reached Riley Cole's place late in the night. He slipped up to the house and knocked on the door and Riley opened it to see who was there.

"Well, be gad if it ain't John Phillips! John, I jest made shore it war another passel o' them pesky Rebel home-guards!" he cried. "Come in, come in, John! Do you want a snooze a while or do ye want a snack? I bet ye'r hongry, if'n ye'r ben a doin' without nothin' to eat like most uv the hideouts air a doin'!"

"Riley, that sure sounds good when you talk about something to eat, as tired as I am," smiled Phillips. "I have scarcely had a bite in two days. Prudy Tidwell fetched me a little pone of bread yesterday but I had to

divide it with Ans Hyde and I could hardly eat the rest of it for thinking of my hungry babies. Prudy said it was the last bite in the house."

"We'll git my wife up an' fix a bite fer ye and ye can git in my fodder loft an' sleep all day. I reckon them Rebels'll not be a specting ye to be in my loft and maby they won't be a takin' my fodder. So maby they won't find ye," Riley offered.

"Riley, do you still want to go to Georgia or the hills of North Carolina?" John asked.

"Well, I can't say as I'm so arvally anxious to go. But I shore be abligin' to any of my friends. And John, I am shore a countin' you nothin' else but a friend. I'm a lackin' some harness and a doubletree a bein' able to hitch a double team, but we can get that sommers. And we'll be off in a day or so."

"Maby we can get a doubletree and a few pieces of harness and gear from my place," offered John. "If them Rebs haven't stold the last piece I've got. We can slip back tonight and see."

"That's right, John — but we want ye to fust git a bite to eat and then git in my fodder loft fer a good day's rest and sleep. I'll let my boy, Alford, go with you back to yer house to git them things to git us ready."

Riley's wife was up and had breakfast of ham and biscuits in a little while. As soon as John had eaten he was ready to retire to the fodder loft for sleep and rest and to dream of slipping away from the tormenting of the home-guards. He knew that if he could get away to the mountains of Georgia or North Carolina he could get a place and send Riley back after his wife and children.

After the fine food and the good sleep and rest

throughout the day, John was so refreshed and happy at the prospects of leaving the community that he could hardly wait until it was dark to be on his way back home for the equipment Riley needed to make the trip. It was a long walk, too, from where Cole lived to his house on the Buttachatcha River. John knew that they would have to start soon after dark in order to get to his place and back to Cole's during the night. Alford was a big fifteen year old boy who loved to hunt and travel in the woods. He was glad to make the trip with Phillips. The two had traveled cautiously for a long way when they finally came to Bill Weatherford's place.

"Hello, Weatherford!" John called, seeing that all was safe. Bill was already in bed.

"Who in tarnashion is it?" Bill replied in a disgruntled manner.

"John Phillips and Riley Cole's boy," Phillips told him.

"Oh! Come on in, you two! I jest lowed as it war some uv them blasted home-guards to pester me again all night. Thar ain't been a night in a month that thar ain't been a passel uv them rascals around here."

"Bill," John spoke confidentially. "Me and this boy are on our way back to my house to get some harness and a doubletree, if them Rebs haven't got the last piece of them, and we may not get farther than this on our way back to Rile's before day. So if you find a tomcat and kitten in your fodder loft, don't go and burn your barn down to get rid of them."

"Not a-tall! Not a-tall!" Weathford chuckled accommodatingly. "Say, John, whar in the tar-thunder air ye going to need that extra harness?"

"Riley is going with me to the mountains of Georgia or North Carolina, where we used to live and see if we

can't find a hiding from them pestering Rebels," John informed him.

"Say, John," Bill continued, after studying a few minutes, "they ain't no peace fer a man around here. First they say the men from eighteen to thirty-five years can win the war. Now they want every man up to forty years old. I am done forty; still they say they aim to take me. I wonder, John, if you'd let me jine you and Riley on that trip? I'd be glad to go with ye tonight and get them harness and doubletree if ye want me to."

"Well, we'll sure be much obliged to you if you will go, Bill," John assured him. "Cause that doubletree is sure big and heavy. We'll need some help. I doubt if this boy can tote it. And I'll tire out before we get here with it."

"We oughter be back fore morning and get breakfast and hide for the day," Weatherford concluded as he finished putting on his clothes.

A few minutes later and the three were on their way as fast as they could walk through the woods, anticipating their trip to the mountains. But their hopes were not to be fulfilled — as they were crossing the Byler Road, a few miles north of Larissa Post Office, suddenly a group of Rebels sprang upon them, and though they tried to run in different directions, they were caught and arrested.

"Here we've got the Tory we've been after!" came the exultant voice of Tobe Gibson. "It's John Phillips!"

John swore under his breath to think that after he had been safe, he had had to return, sticking his neck into the noose so to speak. But there was nothing else now — still, he resolved to escape again if ever the chance came.

"We'll fix ye this time, old Tory, Phillips!" cried Gib-

son. "If I'd knowed it was you at first I'da shot instead of ketching ye! But ye won't git away again!"

Bill Weatherford protested indignantly, "I'm over forty years — not military age," he declared. "You've no call to take me in!"

It did little good; he was tied up along with John Phillips.

"But surely you'll let this boy go, won't you?" John argued. "You can see he's just a kid."

Tobe Gibson replied surlily, "Nope! We're takin' him along, too. He peers to be quite big an' strong! An' serves him right for bein' with a bunch uv Tories like you an' Weatherford!"

But Ham Carpenter was a bit more sensible. "Get yersef back to yer mammy if ye've got airn, son," he warned the boy, and gave him a shove. Tobe Gibson did nothing to prevent the boy leaving.

Carpenter turned back to Phillips. "Ye lousy mossback Tory!" he fumed, "Ye're the ———————— that shot at a bunch uv my men tother day! John Phillips, we oughta end it wid you right here! You'd shore better not be a makin' no mistakes bout it or we'll strang ye up an' shoot yer guts out tonight!"

Phillips made no reply, knowing that he was helpless and the men were desperate and cruel and would do as they threatened if he gave them half an excuse.

Tied together, Phillips and Weatherford were driven along through fields and woods. Weatherford was feeling very bitter about the capture and grated sarcastically to Phillips, "John, ye didn't have this planned to trap me, did ye?"

John gritted his teeth as he looked at the other. "You

accuse me of that and I'll bash your blamed nose off your face! I'm a white man, myself! I may die right here, tied to you, but I'll never deceive you nor betray you!"

Before long they reached the home of old man Henry McNutt and hammered at his door till he came out.

"Hey, Henry!" the ruffians shouted, "We got a couple a Tories here and want somethin' to eat! Got any taters or anything to eat?"

"Mighty afraid I ain't got nothin', men! Might have a few taters I'm savin to bed fer slips," the old man said apprehensively.

"Get em, Henry! We're hongry!" came the curt command.

So the old gentleman had to go to his cellar under the house and bring out a toesack of small potatoes.

"Is ziz all ye got, Henry?" the Rebels asked with contempt as they began to peel the potatoes and scatter the peelings on the porch.

"Ain't ye got a boy around here, Henry?" Tobe put the vital question to the old man.

"Got one here but he ain't ole enough to go to war," was the reply.

"How old is he?" Carpenter asked.

"He's jest seventeen. Won't be eighteen till fall," McNutt told them.

"He'll be old enough by the time he's trained; get him!" Tobe Gibson decided. And the men stormed into the house after the boy — so young William McNutt was brought out of the house, arrested and taken along.

They all finally reached Stamford Prison, an old log house, built for the purpose of keeping prisoners. It was located across the Buttahatcha River, a short distance

from the Mitchell Forte in eastern Marion County, and served as the headquarters for the home-guards.

Phillips, Weatherford, young McNutt, and others were placed in the prison with a lot of other men whom the home-guards had caught during the day. Throughout the night more men were brought from various sections and piled into the place until it was completely filled.

The place was hot and filthy and crowded. It had but a single room with but one door and not a window in it. The prisoners were compelled to sleep on the floor, crossed about on each other, using their bodies for pillows. The prison had no toilet or bath facilities of any kind.

The only food given to the prisoners the next morning was a batch of boiled beef which they were compelled to gnaw off the bones as they stood huddled together.

Well along in the day the men were handcuffed or tied with ropes and driven across the river to the Mitchell Forte to appear before Adjutant General May and answer for their failure to be in the army. May was the first man yet seen by some of them who was wearing a Confederate uniform.

Phillips and Weatherford were among the first to be called for trial.

"Why aren't you already in the army?" May put his question to Weatherford.

"Because I am already over forty," Weatherford replied.

The other smiled grimly. "That's just the age we are wanting now," he told Weatherford, and Weatherford didn't know what to say at learning this new classification.

"I'll go then, if I have to," he said, "but this is the first I knew of it — and I've got to go back home and get me

some more clothes. I didn't realize I was comin' here when I started. Besides, I've got rheumatism so bad I can't hardly walk."

"It'll be a long time before you see your home again," May told him sarcastically. "We've got a doctor in the army that will fix your rheumatism and the Confederacy will give you some clothes."

May then turned Weatherford over to the cavalry to send him to Roddy's command. And after one or two others had been questioned by him, Phillips was called before him.

John had been listening to the answers the other men had received from May when they tried to offer reasons for not being in the army. These answers which these men had received, certainly gave him no consolation.

"What is your age and general condition of health?" May asked him sharply, rebukingly.

"I am twenty-five years old, sound and healthy; never been sick a minute in my life," Phillips answered disdainfully.

"Then why aren't you in the army?" May demanded.

"Just because I don't want to be," John told him emphatically

May was startled at the audacity of the prisoner, then pounded his fist on the table. "Very well — I shall send you to Richmond," he declared.

Phillips was still defiant. "It'll take more than you to send me there!" he snapped boldly.

"Put this Tory, John Phillips, back in jail," May instructed the men under him. "We'll see about breaking his spirit!"

For several days John languished in the filthy prison. It was almost unbearable. The men had to bring in their water from a nearby spring. Each one was glad when his turn came to go for the water, hoping that this would give him an opportunity for escape. But each, in turn, found that he was too well guarded for him to even try to make an attempt at escape.

Men came and went — some were sent off to Richmond, others to Roddy. And John finally decided that he would a good deal rather be almost anywhere else than in the filth he was having to endure.

Most every day there were Rebel sympathizers who came around the prison to see who had been caught and to talk to the prisoners. One day a man, Burrel Howell, and two other old friends of John's, Jim and Lang Allen, appeared and showed great interest in him. John managed to have quite a talk with them and got them to talk to May and the other Confederate officers about giving him a furlough — and they promised to do that, even to signing a bond guaranteeing that he would report to Roddy in ten days.

John was glad to do this in order to be out of the mess in the prison and with his family for a little while.

"John, this is the second furlough you've had, and you're under bond this time," Howell told John Phillips, as he signed for him to be released from the prison. "Don't try anything funny this time — for you'll find it's anything but funny next time you're caught!"

Chapter XI

THE TORIES JOIN THE YANKS

The time finally came for John Phillips to report to Roddy's command at the foot of the mountain south of Tuscumbia — and when he did report, he was at last sworn into the Confederacy along with a group of men who had come from north Mississippi. He hated having to go through with this, but there was no other alternative.

Then he got his first orders.

"You will be on picket duty tonight," Colonel Walker instructed him, and John accepted his orders on paper and started out in the direction of the location. As he walked along he saw a familiar figure and studied it intently, then, "Well, drat my hide," he mused, "if it ain't!" He waited for a few seconds to make sure he was right, then concluded, "Well, I'll be blamed if it ain't Cal Miles!" He started, almost running in the direction of the other man. "Howdy, Cal!" he cried joyfully, slapping the other on the shoulder.

Miles turned and stood speechless for a time, looking John over, hardly able to believe the evidence of his own eyes. Then he said with a broad smile, "Well, bless my soul, John, if ye ain't here in this dad-burned mess of Rebels, right here wid me. John, we both said we'd never do it. How'd them rascals git ye, John? Wuz ye in that bunch a while ago they swore in this Reb army?"

Cal talked so fast that Phillips could not get a word in

edgeways and had to smile, despite the gravity of their position.

Finally he managed to be heard. "They got me just like they got you, Cal Miles," he declared angrily. "One thing I am glad of — that is that they swore us all in together in that bunch a while ago, cause I shore as the dickens didn't hold up my hand, and I didn't say I'd fight in this plague-gonned Rebel army, either!"

"But, John, I thought you weren't coming to this stinkin' mess of Rebs? That's what you said!"

"Listen, Cal Miles!" John declared scathingly, "You mention that again —. I am bad enough put out with having to come here, let alone having it rubbed in on me!"

"What is your assignment?" Cal changed the subject tactfully, seeing that John was in no mood to be heckled about landing in the Rebel army.

"Picket duty," Phillips told him in a better frame of mind. He held out the paper with the orders on it.

"Well, good!" Cal chuckled, looking it over. "You and me are on the same outpost."

"Say, Cal," John suggested suddenly, speaking low, "I'll back you out — what ye say we slip to them Yankees this very night?"

"We can't do it, John." Cal shook his head. "Them blamed devils are a'watching each other a lot closer'n they're a'watchin' them Yankees! Why, I saw a man shot down t'other night before he could give the counter-sign cause one of them blamed sentries thought he was trying to slip through to the Yankees."

"Well, what ye say we don't load a gun? If them Yankees come, let's let em get us! What do you say to that?"

"Trouble is, we're on the opposite side of camp or I'd a'done bin in the Yankee lines fore now," Miles whispered.

"We can at least hope the Yankees will capture us and not kill us," Phillips said hopefully, surveying the countryside about them in the gathering darkness.

"We won't be so far apart on our stations," Cal suggested as they were separating for their posts. "If the Yankees capture either one of us, we can tell them about the other."

"That suits me fine. I'll be waiting for 'em," Phillips responded cheerfully.

* * *

Neither man met with any luck that first night, however.

For several days John remained on picket duty in the Confederate army. The Rebels south of Tuscumbia had been inactive for quite a while, guarding the Yanks against raids south of the Tennessee River. John and Cal Miles were separated for a time, but finally came up with each other again and found the opportunity to talk together without anyone else too close about.

"Well, I'll be ———!" Cal said, "John, I thought shore you had done gone. Whar in tarnashion have ye bin?"

"Right about here, on duty — but I reckon different spot than afore, so we jest didn't get to see each other for a spell," John explained. "I was hoping you, at least, had managed to get away!"

Their conversation was now interrupted as one of the staff officers called, "Attention!"

As they came to attention, the officer asked, "Is there anybody here who lives near the Allen factory in Marion County?"

Cal looked at John apprehensively as if to say, "Now, you are into it, John!"

John Phillips was just about ready to volunteer the information that he lived near there when Miles whispered, "Look out, John — might be a trap!"

The officer cried again, "Is there anyone here that lives in Marion County who has a horse?"

"No telling what it is; I'll take a chance," John whispered to Cal and walked over toward the officer. "I, sir, live seven or eight miles below there," he explained.

"What kind of a mount do you have?"

"A stout little mule," John admitted, glad that his mule was not any smaller.

"We've got a corpse over at the hospital. Mose Pace lived at Allen's Factory. We want you to take him home for burial."

An expression of delight and relief swept over Phillips' face.

"Do I get any time?" John asked the officer when, a few moments later his orders were being filled out. He was feeling uneasy that the officer would ask Roddy or May to sign the order.

"Ten days," the officer informed him, and John felt his heart leap happily within him and he had to bite his lips hard to keep from shouting his satisfaction. Ten days would give him a long time at home — maybe a chance to get away for good.

No delay ensued and within an hour Phillips was on his way, walking and leading his mule with the body tied

across its back. It was a grim mission — a sad one, but for him it was also a joyous one. He hurried on to his own home as fast as he could after leaving Pace's body at his home on Bear Creek.

* * *

John's wife looked startled and fearful when she first saw John coming down the road, and ran to meet him, the children following her a good way behind.

"Oh, John!" she cried, as she threw her arms around him. "How could you — get here, John? Oh, you should have been more careful — they'll catch you again and most likely kill you this time! You came in daylight — how did you get away?"

John hugged and kissed her and laughed happily.

"I got free leave," he told her, and held out his papers with the orders on them, then reached down to embrace his children who came running up.

Mahala read and wept tears of happiness.

"John Phillips of Thorn Hill, Marion County, Alabama, ordered to deliver the body of Mose Pace to his home at Allen's Factory on Big Bear Creek. Reports to Mitchell's Forte, June 25th, for further assignment.

Signed, Mat Threadgill,
(Officer Confederate Army,
4th Cavalry Division.)"

"Is everything still all right, dear?" John asked in deep concern.

"Just as when you left so far as we are concerned," she told him reassuringly. "If it hadn't been that the Rebels had taken all we had before you went."

"What is the news in the country?" he asked next.

"Preacher Green Haley was by yesterday and told us of the most brutal killing that has happened yet."

"Who was it?" John asked anxiously.

"It was Jack Walker. The whole bunch of home-guards, including Gibson's, Carpenter, and Stoke Roberts' men, all went to southeast Winston about a week ago and found Jack and his boy, Bill, in the woods. They shot Jack and crippled him. Bill run off and got away. They took Jack and hacked him all to pieces with hatchets."

"Didn't they even give him five days chance to join?" John asked indignantly.

"No! Jack and Bill shot at the home-guards and when they shot Jack and caught him, they were so mad they chopped him all to pieces without giving him a chance. Preacher Haley said they chopped every limb he had off his body. The whole thing was revolting. Bill couldn't even help bury his dad."

"Yes, that's the kind of bunch these Rebels are," John declared angrily, completely disgusted. "That's the kind of devils they want us poor men to fight for!"

"They thought that Jack Walker shot at Dr. Kaiser and Judge Parker a while back," his wife finished.

John went about the place looking at the crop Mahala had and wishing he could stay there and help her harvest it.

While he was home on leave, John wasted no time but worked all he could on the crop. The day before his furlough was up, he went to see Green Haley, a Disciple of Christ minister, across the river from Mitchell's Fort.

"Hello, John Phillips!" the good-natured old gentleman with long white chin-whiskers cried as he saw John heading for his yard. The old man was sitting in a huge

wicker chair on his front porch. "John, I thought that you were already in that rotten Rebel army?"

"I was — but I came home to bring the body of Mose Pace home for burial," John explained.

"Well, well, another poor man who gave his life for that stinking bunch of Rebels," the other said in a chiding manner.

"Where are your slaves, Uncle Green?" Phillips asked on seeing there were none of the Negroes about the place.

"I reckon the impressment officers got most of them," the old man told him. "I told the whole bunch a month ago that they could do just as they liked. The whole bunch of them were free. Old Ike and Susie, the cook, are still here; the rest have gone somewhere. I hear the impressment men got the whole bunch and took them to Walker County."

"I was just wondering if I couldn't get you to send some of them over to my place to help my wife finish the crop," John told him.

"I'd be glad to, but they are done gone," came the reply. "When do you have to report back, John?" The old man laid the paper he had been reading beside his chair.

"Got to report for assignment at Mitchell's Fort tomorrow," John said, his lips quivering with emotion.

"Say, John," the old man suggested, "I believe that me and Jim Allen can get General May to give you another furlough, if you want, till you can get your crop done."

"I'd sure appreciate that," John told him. "Since I've got to report tomorrow, could you maybe go with me then and see about it?"

"Sure, if you'll go today and see Jim Allen and get him to go with us, we'll sure go," came the welcome answer.

John was so happy about this proposal that he left immediately for Allen's place, and made the arrangements.

When John said goodbye to his wife and children this time he did not feel so despondent, feeling confident that he would be back home quickly. The trip back to Mitchell's Fort was made and John and his two companions arrived there about eleven o'clock the next day. They at once sought out May, but found that he was in no mood to talk with them for some reason — he was in a touchy mood.

"What are you two men doing? Bringing that Tory, John Phillips, back here again?" he asked cuttingly.

"This man has been in Roddy's army and is out on special orders," Allen informed him boldly. "We would like for you to extend his furlough till he can finish his crop, if you will. It's important that the crops be harvested — vital to victory. And there's no one else to help get his done."

"Extend his furlough, He—! We have had more trouble with that Tory than anybody else in the country, and here you men are begging for another furlough! The H—— no! Where is your gun?" He was bitter and began to grab some guns they had there. "Here, take these guns!" he ordered.

One of the other officers took the guns and began to pass them out to a group of men waiting there. John Phillips cleverly reined his little mule around behind a man on a big bay, and got no gun.

"Let's go, men — on our way to Winston County — got a bunch of Tories there we've got to get!" cried Gibson, taking over now, yelling in his detestable voice.

The group started riding north on the Burleson Road.

When they were about opposite where Phillips lived, he rode his mule out under a big pine tree. It was coming on a big shower of rain.

"Fall in line, John Phillips!" Ham Carpenter ordered, seeing his action.

John pretended to be very sick, doubling up and groaning. "I'm mortal sick, and I haven't a gun anyway. I can't go any farther," John moaned.

The other studied him for a moment, then relented and yelled, "You go on home and report back here at Mitchell's Fort tomorrow." Then he rode on.

So Phillips went back home once more and told his wife, Mahala, "I am determined not to go back to that mess of Rebels. You take this mule and rig up some kind of gear and plow the crop as long as you can. I'm going to take to the woods again."

He said farewell to his wife and children that very night and slipped away, realizing that at night he would have his best chance to get away unobserved.

When the home-guards and cavalrymen came looking for him a few days later they were really riled. They took his mule from his wife and swore they would kill John if they ever sighted him.

But John made his way safely to the home of Buck West, who lived not far from Natural Bridge in Winston County, reaching there late in the evening of the next day.

"Howdy, Buck!" he greeted the family, sitting on the porch.

They were glad to see him.

"Come in, John. Glad to see you," said Buck. "Lowed as you wuz in the army with them Rebs 'fore now!"

John had hardly entered the house when a group of Rebels rode up.

"Howdy, Buck!" they shouted, not having anything against the man and his family.

"Howdy, men. Won't ye stop an' rest a while?" Buck cried, going to the yard gate, figuring boldness was the best way out.

"Nope! Got no time now. On our way home for the night," they told him. "We're going to get that Tory, John Phillips yet — he's around here somewheres!"

The invitation to enter had entirely put them off suspicion.

As Buck and John, back in the house, watched them disappear, Buck was pale.

"For God sakes, John! You'd best get out of this section in a hurry!" Buck said. "Those men'll kill you in a minute if they see you. Head on to Natural Bridge. There's a bunch already there — and me and Buddy will be on when he gets in tonight — and I'm going with him to the Bridge. Buddy's home from that blamed Rebel army, and he ain't going back. He's hiding out today and aims to slip in tonight — we'll meet you at the bluff, where the men are."

* * *

John agreed to this. He picked up his old gun, which he had set down on the porch against the wall and headed for the bluff.

During the night, Buck and Buddy came to the bluff also with a load of food and provisions.

The next day Bill Dodd from Marion County came in. He had been exempt under the forty-year limit, but the Rebels had raised the age and now he was having to hide out, too.

Bill was jovial and funny. He had his blankets tied on him in saddle fashion. He got down on his hands and

feet like a horse and paraded before the men. He had killed a deer and brought it along. He also had a big sack full of bread and some salt and coffee.

"I am a'goin' to stay here till the grass on my back gets a foot long," he laughed as he went about the camp.

Poor John Phillips was in for a sudden shock and sorrow, however — just when things seemed to be going better for him.

The following day, Hugh McClellan the blacksmith, came running excitedly to the edge of the bluff calling for John.

"Hey, John! John Phillips!"

"What ye want?" John answered, coming forward, wonderingly, for he could see that Hugh was badly excited.

Hugh looked at him sympathetically and said, "John, I'm sorry to have to tell ye this, but your little Aribella took sick and died right in your yard."

"My God! It can't be true!" gasped John. "How did it happen?" Tears were streaming down his cheeks.

"Your wife said she was in the yard playing, natural-like — and all of a sudden took sick and died in a few minutes."

"Did them d—— Rebels shoot her or poison her?" John asked.

"Well, of course, we don't know," Hugh said hesitantly, "but it does look awful suspicious."

John waited to hear no more but set out for his home and arrived before too long, for he wasted no time on the way, nor was he molested by any home-guards. Still it seemed ages to him before he got there.

He found the house filled with sympathetic women and

children, and was met by several at the door, who looked frightened on seeing him.

"N–no — John, you can't come back here!" Nancy Allen told him. She and two or three other women met him at the door and tried to keep him away.

John pushed on in. "I am going to see that child of mine!" he insisted determinedly. He went on into the room where the child already lay in a home-made coffin which Prudy Tidwell had made of rough pine planks. John kissed the face of the cold, lifeless child and knelt sadly beside the casket, bathing it with his tears.

For a few moments the women stood back, leaving him alone with his grief, knowing it was what he desired. Then they came to him and took him by his arms.

"John," they said as they raised him up, "you have seen your poor child — that is all you could do. Now you had better think of yourself. Them dastardly Rebels have already sworn that they were going to guard the child's grave in order to get you, so you'd better slip away again."

John was stubborn in his grief, however. "I'll not go," he declared. "I am going to stay here and bury my child, regardless of the whole Rebel army. I'm not afraid of them. The way I feel now, I'd as soon be dead as alive. I want to stay right here and shoot them devils just as long as I can pull a trigger."

"John, do go," his wife begged, "you've still got me and the others to live for — sometime we'll be together again and happy, when all this mess is over. Think of that — if they catch you here they'll burn everything we have left."

A group of the women gently but firmly took John away, talking sense to him.

"You can't do any good by staying around here, but may do harm instead," they argued. "We can take care of everything and bury your sweet little angel."

And finally John consented to leave, but he still swore, "I'll kill every d—— Rebel I can ever lay my eyes upon."

* * *

On his way back to Natural Bridge, John saw a large group of the Rebel home-guards on the Byler Road near Larisa. He waited until they had passed — then he ran up on the roadside and fired at the group from the rear, unable to control his anger. They stampeded in all directions, being in truth very cowardly. He made his way on to the hideout without incident. By this time some three or four hundred men from a dozen counties had gathered.

A big fellow by the name of Lum Thunderburk was talking to them. "Men," he was saying, "we have enough of you here today to defend ourselves against almost any raid that could come along. Do you want to stay here and fight them?"

"We'd like to, so we could be near our folks, and help them," allowed Bill Dodd, "but we don't have any guns sufficient for that. Besides, we can't stay here, we haven't enough food. We've got to get some way to find food and guns."

"What do you want to do then?" Thunderburk asked.

"For us to fight these Rebels here would be endangering our families too much," mused Bart Pugh.

"I don't want to do anybody any harm. All I want is to keep from being killed," asserted Bill McCaleb of Fayette County

"I'll tell you what we'll do," proposed Thunderburk, "Let's give every man a choice and all determine what

he wants to do. In that way each can tell how the other stands. First, let's let all that want to join in with the Rebs step out here on the left."

Not a man moved.

"Second, let those who want to join the Yankees step over on the right."

A hundred men quickly moved in that direction.

"And the rest can do as you wish," Thunderburk declared. "Let us set a day when we will all meet here and tell everybody who wants to go with us to join us and we will go to the Yanks."

"Let's set the tenth of the month to go to the Yankee lines," suggested Andy Logan.

"Then we will meet here the ninth of this month and go as far as we can that day and on to the Yankees the tenth," Thunderburk advised.

"We had better send the Yanks word that we are coming, hadn't we?" questioned Bill Dodd.

"That's right. We'll get Bill Looney to contact the Yankees and tell them we're coming and find out where they want us to come to," Woodruff joined.

After this decision most of the men went their ways to their own hideouts to get ready for the trip to join the Yanks and to tell others of their plans.

* * *

As the men gathered at Natural Bridge on July 9th, they were informed by their leaders, Woodruff Miles and Lum Thunderburk, that the dependable Bill Looney had already made contact with the Federals at Decatur and that they were to come there.

Taking what provisions they could bring with them, they started out for Decatur. Before night of July 9th, most of the men were pretty well worn out. But they kept

on, their resolve firm to join up with the Union armies. And finally all had reached their destination and joined up with the Yanks — at Decatur and other places — some one hundred and ninety of the men were formed into what was later known as the Alabama Union Cavalry, under Colonel G. E. Spencer.

* * *

Bill Walker was a very bitter young man after the fiendish killing of his father. He had been in hiding for some time — he was dirty, his hair was long and unkempt. The only thing that gave him a bit of interest in life was his thoughts of Cherry. He knew that he was in love with the girl and he felt that she cared for him, too — and only her father stood in the way of their being happy together. The more he thought it over the more he decided he must get to see the girl again.

So one day he slipped back to his home, which was now a tumbled-down log-house with part of the boards that had been held in place with weight poles, gone. Their furniture consisted of two home-made bedsteads made by nailing planks to a post and the wall and hard rough slats across these planks and in the crack of the log wall and a hearth oven and frying skillet were their cooking utensils.

"Mom," he told his mother, "I want to wash and get you to shingle my long, wooly hair. I am going some place today."

"Oh, son, I am so lonesome. So sad," she sighed. "I do wish you could stay with me." She began to cry. This was the second time Bill had gotten a chance to slip home since the home-guards had butchered his father.

"Mom, I'm not going away for long," he assured her.

"Well, I'm glad of that. I was afraid you were settin' out to go to the Yankees," she said. "Ain't you nearly starved, Bill? You've been laying in them woods for so long."

He shook his head. "Mom," he told her, "I have made it purty good about eats. What I need is a change of clean clothes."

"Son, the only britches on the place is a pair of your Paw's. He wore them fore he was killed. I washed them. They are clean," his mother told Bill.

"That's fine," Bill said. "Now, maw, I want you to cut my hair off of my neck." He pulled the long tags of hair on his neck to show how long it was.

"Where are you going, Bill?" his mom asked as she took the large scissors and began to trim his hair.

"I am gonna slip back and see Cherry," the boy spoke with confidence.

"Oh, no, Bill!" she gasped. "I don't want you to do that, cause you know your Paw didn't want you to see Cherry and you know that Judge Parker has done threatened to shoot you if you ever go back to his house." She fussed nervously with the scissors.

"But, Mom," protested the boy, "one of the last talks me and Pa had fore them Rebs killed him, he told me he hoped I'd win Cherry for my wife, cause she is such a fine girl and it would be servin' old Judge right for the way he has treated Cherry." Bill continued to explain. "Mom, I guess these ain't too bad." He was looking at the britches he had put on. "The shirt is all right, too. Thanks for the haircut, Mom — I'll hurry on and see

Cherry afore I come back." He kissed her goodbye affectionately.

* * *

When Bill reached Judge Parker's place the next day, he went to the Negro quarters, hoping to find Sincy.

"My Lor'! What you don wants, Mistah Bill?" Sincy cried nervously when he met her alongside a cabin.

"Sincy, I want you to go to the house and tell Cherry that I want to see her. And ask her if I can come to her house and see her. Will you, Sincy?" Bill said anxiously. "If she says yes, then I want you to run and tell me."

"I sho will do dat fo you, Mistah Bill."

Sincy turned and began running toward the house.

Bill paced back and forth back of the cabin until, after what seemed ages, Sincy returned, running as fast as she could.

"Cherry say fo you to come, Mistah Bill." She seemed happy to bring the news.

Bill went quickly to the back hall door and into the house.

"Cherry, I — I —" There were tears in his eyes. "I just had to see you, Cherry!"

"I am glad you came, Bill," she spoke softly. "Come on in." She led him to the parlor.

"Cherry, I just had to see you to tell you. I hope you will understand." He was at a loss to say what he intended.

"Bill, I am so sorry that the war has done so much to destroy our country." Cherry was sympathetic.

"Cherry, I love you so much," Bill said, looking right into her eyes. "I do wish I could see you for a long time. But I just had to tell you." He was fumbling uneasily

with his hat and listening carefully for outside noises. "Cherry, if I could have your love, I'd be so happy. Do you love me, Cherry?" He could not resist asking the vital question.

"Bill," Cherry said sincerely, leaning closer to him, "I do love you with all my heart."

Bill started to put his arm about the girl's shoulder, but she turned away. "No — no, Bill," she cautioned.

"Then I must go, Cherry," he said. "But I just had to tell you. I want you to remember me while I'm gone. I may not get to see you again for a long time, Cherry, but I'll come back — and the time will come when we can be together — can have each other for keeps."

"Yes — dear! I'll be waiting!" she told him.

He slipped out of the room and left the house. He looked back and waved to her and she waved to him just before he disappeared into the woods.

Chapter XII

REBEL ATROCITIES

After the large number of Tories had slipped away and joined the Yankees at Decatur, the Rebel home-guards were more infuriated than ever. They had it in in particular for Bill Looney, knowing that he was largely instrumental in helping the Tories make their way safely to the Yankee lines. For several days they hung about Bill Looney's tavern, waiting for him to return. But he was too wise to show up and finally they gave up waiting for him and in their mad anger burned down the tavern and all the other buildings on his place in a spirit of sheer vandalism.

From Looney's place they went on about the countryside, searching for more Tories to harass. They soon heard of Joel Curtis, a young brother of Pink and Wash Curtis, who lived near the Fall City Post Office in southeast Winston County.

"Let's git him, men! He oughter already be in the army or in jail," Stoke Roberts declared.

"Joel Curtis is a fine young man and we ought to give him a chance," John O. Kelly, one of Stoke's men, who was not quite as vindictive, protested.

Stoke glared at him. "Any man that's akin to Wash and Pink Curtis is a Tory and oughter be in the army or dead!" he declared. "Come on, men!"

They headed for Joel's place and soon found Joel with

his young wife, Nancy, and their four small children in a small patch of corn well hidden in the woods.

As the home-guard rode into the field, Joel saw them, guessed their intent and broke into a run.

Whit Hulsey, one of the Rebs, shot near him and cried, "Halt there or I'll kill you next shot!"

Joel turned to run in the opposite direction, but the men saw him and closed in on him. It was useless to try to get away.

"Kill him, men! Kill him for trying to get away instead of doing his duty!" Stoke Roberts shouted angrily.

But as the men started to level their guns to shoot Joel down, his wife, Nancy, ran to him and threw her arms about him.

"Don't shoot, men — for God's sake!" she pleaded hysterically. Her three oldest children, little more than babies, were screaming as though in fits.

The men seized Joel and tore him away from his wife.

"Get one of his plow-lines and let's tie the Tory up and take him to jail," Beckner, another of the men, commanded. "Get his horse loose from that plow and we'll take him, too!"

"Oh, men — won't you have mercy?" Nancy begged pitifully.

"Put him on his own horse now!" Stoke Roberts commanded. "Beckner and Hulsey and I will take him on to Jasper while you other men go back to his house and round up every cow and calf and shoat you can find and bring them on with you. Take everything you can fetch from the house, too!"

Nancy was so stricken that she sat on the ground now screaming and pleading hysterically. "Don't kill him,

men! Please don't kill him!" Her babies watched her and screamed as she did.

The men paid no attention to her. For some time she lay prostrate, weeping, her children weeping about her. Then she regained her strength and went to the house, where she found that the raiders had carried out their evil designs, stealing all her quilts, dishes, pans, food — taking even the last meat from the smoke-house and all the corn from the crib. Not a hog nor a cow was to be seen.

"Oh, how I wish I could go to see him!" the poor woman wailed. "It wouldn't do any good, though. May God have mercy — those brutal wretches!"

When night came, she was surprised to find that the men had overlooked one small bull yearling. "I don't know why they left that," she mused. "No doubt, though, God has spared it for a purpose."

* * *

The home-guards next sought out a man by the name of Mitch Kanidy, whom they felt should have signed up with the Confederate army long before this.

When they reached his home, Louisa, his wife, met them at the door.

"Where is that man of yours?" Gibson asked. "We've come to get him for the army!"

"I don't know," she finally managed to say, wringing her hands nervously in her apron.

"You're most likely lying to us," snapped Gibson, "but we'll hang around and get him yet! If he won't come willing, we'll kill him for the traitor he is!"

Poor Louisa could do nothing to warn her husband, as the men scattered about the house in the woods to await his return. Some hid on top of the bluff and some

on the level below. The sumac bushes were already turning a golden yellow and red leaves were beginning to fall from the trees. The men held their guns carefully in front of them, completely on the alert, as though expecting to flush a bevy of quail or a rabbit.

The search went on for more than an hour when, "Here he is, men! Here the devil is!" Gibson shouted.

"Bang! Bang!" roared the guns.

Kanidy was running among the sumac toward the edge of the bluff in a desperate attempt to escape. Another blast from the guns roared as Mitch leaped from a towering bluff.

"Yonder he is — see him jump from that high bluff," Ham Carpenter shouted.

Kanidy was coming toward some of the men hidden in a clump of green ivy, unsuspecting his danger.

"Wait a minute, till he is closer," Carpenter warned his men.

Then Kanidy saw them and broke down the hillside.

"Shoot, men! Shoot the devil — shoot!" came the frantic shouts from the men on top of the bluff. A volley of shots rang out from the guns below.

"Oh, Lordy!" Kanidy screamed.

"We've got him, men! We've got him!" Ham Carpenter shouted. "Be careful there," he warned one of the men who started on to where Kanidy lay. "He might not be dead, yet!"

"Might not be dead!" one of the men mocked. "Why, he is as dead as a rock, I reckon, with half of his guts already running out of his belly!"

Louisa, Mitch's wife, had heard the shots and the screams of her husband and now came running through the woods in that direction. A bush caught her foot and

she tripped. The force of her fall threw her a long way down the hill.

"Oh, my Lord — my Lord!" Her plaintive screams came to the ears of the men.

"That's a good-lookin' young woman," Gibson said, as Louisa came running on toward them. "We oughta rape the bitch!" he finished.

"No, ye won't do no sech a thing neither," came the determined words from Sam Noles. "Ye touch that woman and I'll blow yer brains out, Gibson! We've killed her man cause he wouldn't fight fer our country and I'll see that no d—— man is going to mistreat thar women!" Noles looked at Gibson straight in the eye.

The men were gathered around Kanidy's body as it lay prone on the ivy bushes and ground.

"Well, that's got him! Let's go, men!" Gibson suggested finally.

Louisa now began begging, "Please, men, help me at least take him to the house. Please, men — I can't carry him by myself, and the hogs will eat him as sure as I leave him. Men, please help me, please do!"

Her pleas were unheeded.

"Let's go, men. We ain't got no time to fool with dead Tories!" Gibson said harshly — and at his command, the men followed him from the bloody scene.

It was growing late in the evening. Louisa wanted to go for help but was afraid to leave her husband that long to get the nearest neighbor to help get her husband into the house. It was a half mile to the nearest — Coleman West, and he was in the Yankee army and could not be at home. There would be no one to help except women.

She was just about to climb back up the high steep

cliff when a drove of wild hogs came charging through the woods toward her and the body. They had smelled the blood and were hungry. Louisa hunted for a stick, found a dead sourwood which she broke and used to drive the hogs away. Then she raised the head of her husband, sat on the ground and laid his head in her lap. Here she sat in tears and anguish throughout the night. Time after time the pack of hogs circled around her, coming even to her reach until she would have to beat them away.

Wolves stood along the bluffs on each side of the deep hollow and howled and whined throughout the night.

"Lord, spare me to the coming of day," she prayed as the nerve-wracking trial went on.

The next morning Ellie West, the wife of Coleman, came hunting for Louisa. She went through the woods hollering her loudest and finally Louisa heard her and answered.

"Lord, Ellie, God only knows how proud I am that you thought of me," Louisa cried as Ellie came to her.

"Poor thing — them are wretched murderers," Ellie sympathized on seeing Mitch. "When did they do this, Louisa?"

"Yesterday evening — a while before night. And, Ellie, I have sat all night in the same spot to beat the wild hogs off of him. I wish you'd go and get someone to come and help me get him to the house and bury him."

"I'll be glad to, Louisa," said Ellie, and off she went to get help. She came back soon with several women and one or two old men, who helped carry Mitch's remains to his house, and later on to Omary Cemetery, where they buried him.

* * *

These were only a few of the stories of atrocities committed by the home-guards in the name of "justice" — the best interests of the "South" — the Confederacy, as they insisted. Useless, fiendish killing — murder!

* * *

On August 13th, 1862, Captain P. D. Roddy was on his way from Tuscumbia with his 4th Alabama Cavalry to join General Bragg and his forces at Chattanooga. At the same time Bill Looney was on his way back from Decatur to Winston County. Looney had been to Decatur to scout another small group of men to the Yankee lines.

Suddenly, despite his caution, a group of advance-guards sighted him. Immediately a shout went up: "Look, men, yonder is a Tory!"

"It's Bill Looney! That blasted Tory that's done so much scouting of them mossbacks to them Yankees!" another cried, recognizing him.

"Let's kill the devil. Let's shoot him all to pieces!" came vindictive shouts from others.

"No, let's not shoot him! That's too honorable a death for that devil! Let's hang him and burn him!" others cried.

In a moment the men were after him on their horses.

Bill Looney was up against it at last. He knew he couldn't out-distance his pursuers on foot, and made no attempt to run from them.

A few moments later Looney was surrounded, made prisoner and brought before Captain Roddy and Lemuel G. Mead, who had come up.

"What do you want us to do with him, Roddy?" one of the men asked.

"We've got no way to take care of any prisoners," Roddy returned, then, as he looked good at Looney, he

cried, "Well, I'll be ——. It's that d—— Bill Looney! Hang that Tory!"

The men greeted this order enthusiastically and began tying a rope about Looney's neck. Others began searching along the roadside for a suitable limb to hang him on.

"Here is one, fellers! Here is one!" came gleeful shouts from one of the Rebels, who was pointing to a vertical limb on a huge post-oak.

Just then, however, luck favored Looney again. General Mitchell of the Yanks with his men, came dashing into the group, opening fire as soon as they came close.

A short, furious skirmish ensued — and several men were wounded and some killed. The Rebels managed to get away, however, without those who'd not been killed or injured being captured.

"Mighty glad to see you, General," Bill Looney said with a relieved look on his face as the General paused before him and took in the situation.

"Hello, Bill," grinned General Mitchell. "Say, men, untie this man and give him an escort back toward Moulton. This man has done a lot for his country! We've got to keep him safe!"

* * *

With the invasion of General Bragg into Kentucky in the late summer of 1862, the Federal forces were called out of the Tennessee Valley in Alabama. This provided a joyous relief for the citizens of Alabama.

"I reckon we can have a little rest from the threat of them Yankees in our section of the State now since General Bragg has invaded Kentucky and they have most all been called away from the Tennessee Valley," Doctor Kaiser told Judge Parker as the two were returning to

their homes on a trip from Tuscaloosa, where they had been to confer with Confederate leaders about provisions for the families of those in the Confederate Army.

"There is still a large number of the undesirable element right here in Winston County, though," Parker declared. "It appears to me that we had better take advantage of the quiet from the Yankee raids and try to get our forces organized for the election that is coming up. You know it is going to be time to elect a new county representative to the State Legislature in a few days."

"Do you think we will have any chance to elect a man this time?" Kaiser wanted to know.

"Not unless we can get the folks together better than we did last year," was Parker's firm conviction. "You remember that last year Governor Moore appointed me for Probate Judge and the people five days later, voted almost five to one in favor of Tom Pink Curtis for the Probate Judge."

"Do you think Chris Sheets will want to go to Montgomery again as representative? He is the only Tory in the county that's got sense enough to get there and I believe he would be afraid to go, if he is elected," was the candid opinion of Kaiser.

"Oh, no! Far be it from Chris Sheets to be afraid to go back!" Parker declared. "Why, he'd go in a den of lions and let them eat him up if he thought it would help the Tory cause. And he is sure to be elected if the people vote like they did last year, and the killings here in the county will sure turn the folks in his favor."

Judge Parker was now getting out of his carriage before his house.

"Maybe, if we could get the home-guards to refrain from killing anybody for a while, it would help. And

with a lot of Tories who vote in the Yankee Army, we might be able to swing the election. You'll still run for representative for us, won't you, Judge?" Dr. Kaiser asked, as Zeb was ready to drive on to his place with him.

"I'll do anything to oust those plagued Tories," Parker promised.

Cherry rushed to greet her father as he came into the house with his bags.

"Oh, goodness, Pappa! I am so really glad to see you!" the girl cried. "You have been away from home such a long time!" Cherry kissed her pappa before he reached the doorsteps and took one of his bags.

"How are you, dear, and how is Mamma?" he asked. "Were you all right while I was away?"

"Oh, we are fine. Mamma has been awfully lonesome since you were gone. She is in the garden now," Cherry told him.

"Have you and Mamma had any visitors while I was away?" asked Judge Parker as he set his bag down in his room.

"Well, we did have one, Pappa, but I doubt if you would be interested in him." Cherry knew that her father would resent her having seen Bill.

"Cherry —!" he said loudly, harshly, "Do you mean to tell me that that low-down Tory, Bill Walker, has been here to see you again? And you talked to him?" He was very angry.

"I didn't know he was coming till he was here," the girl returned.

"But you could have refused to see him. That da——, I wish that the home-guards had gotten him along with his old daddy! Cherry, how many more times am I going

to have to tell you that you shan't see that contemptible Tory again?" His voice was furious.

Cherry was crying, "But, Pappa, I can't treat Bill like that because he is human — and he has feelings!"

"Get out of here! I don't want to hear another word of your petty sympathy!" cried her father in a rage. "Here I have worked like a slave trying to help win this war and save our economy and here you are willing to comfort and befriend one of them Tory devils who ought to done be dead! I'll kill that brat as sure as I ever get my eyes on him again!"

Cherry ran to her room in tears and slung herself across her bed and buried her face in her arms and wept for hours. Her mother had come into the house just as her father was ending his tirade. She went to the girl's room without going in to speak to her husband.

"Don't cry, honey —" she consoled, caressing her shoulders. "Your father is a very tired and worn man. The war has caused an awful change in him. Dear, he is not the same as he used to be."

"But, Mother, he can't love me any more. He hates me — he hates me!" Cherry wailed.

"No, no, dear! Your pappa still loves you. It is just because he wants, so much, to protect you that he has done this." The mother's words were consoling.

"No, he can't love me — he can't!" Cherry cried again. "He couldn't treat me this way and say such things if he did!"

Cherry's mother left her room. That night Cherry was still crying. She refused to come for supper.

"Sincy," Mrs. Parker called.

"Yessum, Mrs. Parker," the girl answered.

"I want you to go to Cherry's room and talk with her. She needs someone to sympathize with her so much."

"Yessum, ma'm. I sho do dat." Sincy was on her way immediately to Cherry's room.

"Miss Cherry — Sincy lobes you, honey — Sincy lobes you, chile," she said, patting the sorrowing girl on the arms and shoulders.

Cherry was too hurt to answer. Sincy stretched herself on the bed beside Cherry and gently turned her over to herself in her arms.

"Dah, honey chile — You go to sleep. Sincy will see 'bout dis chile." She held her tight in her arms.

Chapter XIII

THE SLAVES FREED

A month later Alex Underwood and Oran Davis appeared at the home of Judge Parker to confer with Parker and Dr. Kaiser about provisions for the people of their section.

"Howdy, Judge — Howdy, Doc," the two greeted as they approached the two seated on a bench under the big oaks in front of Parker's house.

"Good morning, gentlemen, good morning," the two returned optimistically. "Will you come and sit with us? Or shall we get seats in the house, if you prefer?" Parker finished politely.

"No need to bother about seats, not at all," Underwood assured him. "We just came over to talk with you about the prospects you men found on your trip to the capital, of getting any help for our section, in supplies for our men and their families."

"We might be able to get some help for Marion County or Walker, but the chance sure looks slim about getting any for our County of Winston," Dr. Kaiser replied gloomily.

"I don't understand what you mean?" Oran Davis said, sitting near the doctor on the long bench and looking at him inquiringly.

"I reckon you have heard about the election we had here in Winston County, didn't you?" Kaiser asked with a touch of irony.

"I heard you folks had elected Chris Sheets back to the Legislature," Underwood, who was still a citizen of Marion Country, remarked.

"Hu —," Dr. Kaiser spat a wad of tobacco in a sickening repulsive gesture. "That is just the reason I said, we might get some help for Marion or Walker Counties. They told us in Tuscaloosa a few days ago that they were expecting us to send a loyal man to the Legislature this time, and we have been unable to do it. So I don't know what chance we'll have to get any help."

"Oran tells me that Chris was elected by a big majority again," Underwood commented.

"That's right. This is one time, though, that Chris Sheets had better not go back to Montgomery. If he knows what them men in the capital has laid up for him, he'll not go, either," was the grim opinion of Judge Parker.

"And what is the reaction of the people you saw on your trip to Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation?" Davis asked.

"Well —" Judge Parker got up from the bench and turned around to talk to the other men, "Old Abe, that 'Black Republican,' had just as well not a'wasted his breath so far as the people of Alabama are concerned about freeing the slaves. Oh, of course, there will be a few men who will free them."

"Like old man Green Haley over in Marion County has already done," Davis interrupted.

"Really, I am glad that I had already sold mine several years before," Alex Underwood remarked.

"The most of them that are worth anything have already been impressed into the service. About all the Ne-

groes there are left now are the wimin' and kids," Parker explained.

"It looks like the people of the South have already lost most of their niggers, even if they win the war," Underwood observed.

This talk didn't suit Dr. Kaiser, though; he jumped up and began pounding his fist into his palm close up in Alex Underwood's face. "There is one thing about it that *we* can be blamed proud of, and that is that we have given them up ourselves to fight for us and help us in the war and them Yankees and Black Republicans didn't get the satisfaction of freeing them!" He was mad. Doc still could not stand the thought of anybody favoring the Union.

* * *

Chris Sheets was in the thick of things again — stirring up trouble for himself and the Rebs, because he was firm in his stand for the right and would not allow himself to be intimidated into doing what he felt was not right.

This time Jonathan Barton and Willis Farris had gone with Chris to Montgomery for the meeting of the State Legislature in November, 1862.

Before long Chris was once more expelled from the body and then arrested and imprisoned for treason against the Confederacy. Quotation from Jonathan Barton's letter to Tom Pink Curtis tells of the happenings.

Montgomery, Alabama
November 19th, 1862

Mr. Tom Gartman
Houston, Alabama
Dear John and Folks of Winston County:

It is with much regret that I assign myself the task of writing you. Because I know that you are going to be greatly disturbed when you hear of the criticalness of events here in the State Legislature.

When Chris Sheets appeared in the Chamber of the joint session, he was greeted with boos and jeers from those present until it seemed an eternity of bedlam had broken out.

Chris was very calm and possessed all the time. He continued waving and smiling to the whole audience as long as it lasted. Finally, when the speaker had restored order, the Chairman on the Committee of Credentials, asked him if he had been duly elected. Chris told him that according to the due process of law that had been in operation throughout the duration of the war, he had received a majority of votes in the county and was looked upon by the people as being the duly elected official to represent them in their State body. They then asked Chris what his attitude was toward Secession and the Confederate States and Chis told them that it was the same as it had been from the first.

At this, the members of the Legislature pounced upon him with the viciousness of a pack of hyenas and actually, I thought they had beaten and torn him to pieces. At last, I saw a bunch of them dragging him from the chamber. He had lost his hat and shoes and his coat was gone. His suspenders were dragging on the floor and his shirt was ripped open to the tail. Willis Farris and I followed them till we could see what they were doing with him and saw them throw him like a dog, into jail. They called it arresting him but it was nothing short of brutal violence.

Then the Legislature went through a sham pretense of expelling Chris from the body, on what they claimed was treason and punishable by death.

I haven't got to talk with him since they threw him in jail to see how he is getting along. But a Negro attendant at the jail told me that he thought the man was pretty sick.

We are hoping that they will remain quiet and that there will not be any lynching. They have been threatening him though, and I shouldn't be surprised for it to happen.

If you people there could get the people of the adjoining counties to appeal to the State Legislature in his behalf, it might spare him.

We will try to stay here and see how things go and write you about them when we can.

I hope that there have not been any killings in Winston by the home-guards since we left. Good luck and pray for us.

Very truly yours,
Jonathan Barton."

Tom Gartman and his family were greatly upset by the sad news.

"Just wait, we'll do something about it!" he cried. "I'll go today and send the letter by Bill Looney to General Streight or General Sherman or General Thomas and see if the Yankees can't rescue him!"

Chapter XIV

FAITHFUL FOREVER

Bill Looney, after his close escape from death, continued his work of scouting Tories over to the Yankees. When Tom Gartman brought him the letter to take to Yankee General Thomas he delivered it promptly. Some time after that on a cold, rainy day in December, 1862, he appeared at the home of Tom Gartman.

Tom welcomed him joyfully.

"Come in, Bill," he invited. "What's the good news?"

Ida, who was greatly interested in knowing about the welfare of Chris, came forward eagerly.

"Is Chris out of jail and safe, yet?" she asked.

"I don't know if he is out yet, but he oughter be out purty quick," Bill Looney declared. "I got in tech wid ol General Thomas at Huntsville and give him that letter what you give me, Mister Gartman. And he read it and said, 'I'll tend to this.' He has done give General Crook orders to arrest old man William McDowell and keep him as one of them ——" He was scratching his head trying to think. His eyes were blinking.

"You mean hostage?" Gartman helped him out.

"That's right. That's right," Looney laughed. "I didn't know what one of them are. But I recollect that is what General Thomas called him — and said they'd let Chris outta that jail jest as soon as they hearn 'bout old Will McDowell also bein' a hostage!"

"Oh, goodie, goodie!" Ida could scarcely restrain her joy over the prospects of Chris' being turned out of jail. She ran from the fireplace back toward her own room.

"Bill," said Gartman seriously, "we are sure glad you took the letter to General Thomas. I sure appreciate it a lot. I hope the General can get his release at once."

"So do I," agreed Looney, "and I reckon he will. I'm still scouting men to the Yankee army — I'd do anything to defeat them inhuman Rebs, them blasted devils! Well, I gotta go now. I wanta see Pink Curtis while I am here if I can."

* * *

"Oh, Pappa, look here!" cried Cherry Parker, running into the house in great excitement. She was holding a letter she had just read. "Here's a letter from Adelle McDowell — Dr. Kaiser brought it to me from the Byler Ark Post Office. It says that the Federals have captured Adelle's father, General McDowell, and have him in jail at Huntsville as a hostage for the safe return of Chris Sheets. She says that she is afraid the people of Montgomery may kill Sheets, and if they do her father will be killed, too."

"Cherry —" Judge Parker spoke with great solemnity, "that should be enough to prove to you the truthfulness of what I have been telling you about these Tories and their intentions. We have had a hard time here in north Alabama because of Chris Sheets and his bunch. They have caused us a lot of trouble besides taking our time watching them and trying to get them to help us in the war, when we could have been helping out against the Yankees if it hadn't been for them. Chris Sheets has caused trouble from the very start. He is a brute and ought to be killed. What else did Adelle say, Cherry?"

"That's about all — she just kept telling about how worried she and Mark and her mother were about Mr. McDowell." Cherry was greatly disturbed. She went to her room reading the letter again — wondering if, perhaps the things her father had told her about the war were true after all. Perhaps these men in the hills, who would not help in the war against the Yanks, were to blame for the hardships they were having. Maybe Chris Sheets was the one to blame for their refusing to help in the war. Cherry was now seeing the suffering that was caused by the war was partly due to Sheets and his followers. She remembered Mr. McDowell and his pleasant home. She remembered his family — Adelle, his daughter, who had been her roommate in Huntsville was now deprived of his presence and his big-hearted pleasantness. She tried to think of the McDowell home as it was when she had spent the night there. There could only be a contrast, though, with Mr. McDowell gone.

And Chris Sheets had gone back to Montgomery knowing that he would be imprisoned. He had done this in order to gain the attention of the Yanks so they would take their spite out on innocent Southerners. Maybe he was a beast, a renegade, as her father had always pictured him. Maybe he was the enemy of Southern traditions, a traitor to the State of Alabama and the Confederacy. These faults and misgivings of the Tories kept running in her mind throughout the day. The people of the South were being deprived by the war. They were suffering more and more. Those who would help their enemies were surely not worthy of any respect. She almost hated the whole group that lay out and prolonged the war.

* * *

For a time the rangers and home-guards were not as active in their usual section — but in the spring of 1863, Colonel John T. Morgan gave part of his Rangers permission to come back into Winston and Marion and Fayette Counties to hunt a number of the Tories who had quit the Yankees and gone back to their homes.

Led by Stoke Roberts, they began scouring the country once more committing atrocities in the name of enforcing the Confederate's best interests — in forcing men into the army and punishing those who did not join when they should. So it was they finally reached the home of Henry Tucker, who had been in the Yankee army for about a year and a half, but had gotten cut off from his detachment near Decatur and had returned home.

Henry had been about to slip away to return to the Yanks when Stoke Roberts and his gang rode into the yard.

"Lord, God!" he cried to his wife, "There's a bunch of them home-guards coming up that road now. What can I do?"

"Here, hide quick in this meat box!" Callie, his wife ordered, pointing to a big box of rough planks in the cook room.

Henry leaped into the box as the men rode up to the house and Callie threw an old worn quilt over the top of it.

"Whar is that man ye got hid around here, woman?" Stoke demanded as he and his bunch of ruffians forced their way without knocking into her home.

"How do you suppose there is a man here?" she replied, trying to be calm.

"We seed ya bang that door shut, woman! And there ain't no woman agonna be abangin' that door shet like

that lessen thar is somebody around summers they air a'tryin' to hide," Stoke declared sharply.

"Men, I don't see why you'd be coming to my house looking for anybody," the poor woman tried to argue.

"Woman!" Roberts snapped, "They ain't no use to be alyin' about it cause thar's plenty of folks round here that try to hide them Tories when they git a chance — and that Henry Tucker is bound to be around here summers and we're gonna ketch him fore we quit!"

Callie bit her fingernails nervously — she felt she must have turned pale when they called that name.

"Oh! I am grieved enough already! Won't you please go on and leave my home alone?" she cried pleadingly.

"H—— No! Men, git busy and hunt every crack in the place fer that snake!" Roberts commanded the men.

They began to search under the beds and under the floor and in the loft of the house and in every box and barrel on the place.

"Here he is, Stoke! Here he is!" Gibson shouted finally, pulling the old quilt from the meat box in the cook room.

Stoke ran to the door and saw with gloating eyes the form still crouched in the box.

"Git him, men! Git him!" he shouted.

Henry Tucker leaped to his feet and tried to run, but was grabbed by half a dozen men.

"Whar's the rope, Ham?" Roberts called to Carpenter.

"Here ye air!" One of the men held up a heavy rope. Stoke grabbed it and began tying Henry at once.

"Oh, please, men, don't!" he begged in tones of anguish as Roberts drew the rope about him.

"Thay ain't no use to whimper and beg, Henry Tucker, ye d—— Tory, you! You'll be da—— sorry ye ever shot

at me fore I git through butcherin' on ye!" His language was vile and abusive. "Take him to the woods, men! We've got a lot of work on this fool fore he gits out uv his misery!" Stoke finished.

Henry was tied from his shoulders to his waist. The men threw him across a big horse and threw another rope around his neck and tied it so that one could hold it on each side. Then the group went galloping off with the prisoner jolting along on the horse. Callie had tried to save Henry, but was unable to do a thing. She buried her head in her hands and cried hysterically as the men rode away with their prisoner.

It was already getting dark. The men rode almost a mile and a half from the house.

"Where do ye want to go to, Stoke?" one of the men called.

"Carry him to old Ball Rock," Roberts shouted. "I want to take the devil right back nigh the place where he wunz shot at me a year or two ago!"

By the time the group arrived to where Stoke was leading them, it was already dark. When they stopped, they found Stoke already off his horse beside an old dead pine tree on the ground.

"Split us up some pine and build us a fire fust. We're agonna take a long time fer this," Roberts told the man with a chopping ax. Four of the others were dragging Tucker by the rope around his neck. Others were bringing limbs for the fire.

"Cut off that limb, out from the tree." Stoke pointed to a limb about as high on a tree as he could reach.

"Oh, Lord, Lord, Stoke, don't torture me, please don't! Kill me with your guns or your ax or any other way you

want to, but please don't torture me to death!" Henry pleaded pitifully.

"Shut up! You —" Gibson growled surlily.

The fire was beginning to blaze brightly. The men were standing around obediently, ready to begin.

"Pull his clothes off," Roberts directed.

The men went to work tearing Tucker's clothes from his body, until he stood shivering bare naked.

"Now tie his hands behind him and then cut us a gamboling stick one of you men. We are gonna gambol him and skin the —— alive!" Stoke was getting out a big long knife. "Now, hold his feet! I'm gonna cut him behind his heels for the gamboling stick."

Grinning fiendishly he proceeded to cut the prisoner between the heel, like fixing to hang a hog, paying no attention to Henry's screaming as loud as he could all the time.

"Here is your stick!" Carpenter handed him a stick some two feet long and sharpened at both ends.

Stoke poked the ends in the gashes of the prisoner's legs.

"Now, hang him on this limb, men," he ordered, pointing to the limb he had cut off.

With the prisoner stripped and hanging head down like a hog ready to be gutted, Stoke stepped back and in a cruel pretense of a magnanimous Judge, said, "Now, you damned Tory — if ye got anything to say, ye can say it!"

"Oh Lord, men, please have mercy! Shoot me or knock me in the head or something!" he pleaded.

Stoke laughed. "Skin him, men!" he commanded. "Some git one leg and others another!"

Several of the men began at once, but found their knives too dull.

"Castorate the devil — cut his whole —— and all off!" Stoke ordered. "I want to poke them in his mouth!"

The men, hardened characters one and all, were doing whatever Stoke ordered them to do without hesitation.

"Now punch the devil's eyes out! No — let me have that knife!" Stokes cried, his eyes glowing with fanatical, saddistic fury. "I want to punch his eyes!" He seized the big knife and started boring in the sockets of the miserable man's eyes. Directly, he flipped the eyeballs across the leaves on the ground. "Now I want to cut the bastard's tongue out next!" he rasped. "Here, give me that ax!" Maliciously, with the ax, he broke Henry's jaw on both sides, then pulled his tongue from his mouth as far as he could and proceeded calmly to cut it off, paying no attention to the man's screams.

"Here, now, hand me this —— and his ——; I want him to find out how his own —— tastes!" Stokes grinned barbarously. "Now I want to cut his hide around his head and pull it over his face and tie it! And I want you men to split up a bunch of long pine knots and drive them into his kidneys and his bowels and heart!"

The words were awful — but he meant them.

The men did this until dozens of sharp pine splinters were driven into the suffering prisoner's body. Then, when his struggling in death finally commenced, Stoke bashed his head in with the chopping ax — for he saw no more pleasure of inflicting more torture on the poor man could be had anyway.

William Rowell heard the prisoner's screams for a mile and a half. Tom Johnson and Andy Ingle found the body four days later, still hanging as the torturers had left him and buried him in Omary Cemetery.

* * *

It was the first balmy spring day after a hard, long winter had passed. The hardships of the war had kept people all busy about their own homes.

"Sincy," Cherry spoke in a rather somber tone. "I have just been here in this house so long. I want you to go with me for a walk in the woods."

"Yessum, Miss Cherry," Sincy agreed. She grabbed up a cape for Cherry, but Cherry waved it aside.

"Oh, never mind the cape, Sincy. It's warm," she said, "We won't need any wraps."

"Yessum, Miss Cherry. We kin sho get some hickory nuts, can't we, Mam?"

The two were just ready to leave the house when Lizzie came running to the back door. She was excited but she spoke with caution.

"Sincy, da is a white man what wants t'see ya — down in de woods hind de hog lot!"

"Lo, Liz — shut yo mout! Don't yo kno ain't no white man gonna see me hind dat hog lot?" Sincy looked at her with scorn.

"Who is it, Lizzie?" Cherry asked.

"I ain't sho, Miss Cherry — but I lows dat it is dat Mista Bill man whut come to de quarters while back. He don say fo me don tell nobody but Cherry."

"You go back, Liz, and tell him that if he is Bill, to come on to the house. Because pappa will be coming in before night," Cherry told her.

"Yessum — Mam, I shot do dat!" She was on her way.

"Sincy, you pick up them scraps there from the floor — hurry! It is Bill coming to see me!" Cherry stamped her foot in joyful exasperation. "You can be so stupid! You

heard Lizzie telling me that somebody was down in them woods. I believe it is Bill!"

"Yessum, Mis Cherry — but if it is yo Bill, you'll sho want ago in de woods," predicted Sincy sagely.

"Sincy, what are you saying?"

"Why, yessum, Miss — er — Honey," chuckled Sincy. "Ain't yo afeard fo dat Mista Bill to come to dis house again? Don yo don know what Masa Parker don say he gwine ado if dat boy eber come back to dis house again?" Sincy was looking out the window.

"Listen, Sincy," Cherry said, laying her hand on the girl's shoulder, "I know that is Bill and if he comes to the house, I want you to go and sit on the bench under the shade tree. Sit there all afternoon, till I call for you. That is, unless you hear the carriage coming or somebody comes riding up. And when you hear or see anything, I want you to break to the house as fast as you can and tell me. Do you understand now?"

"Yessum, I sho do dat fo you, Miss Cherry," Sincy said, nodding her head wisely. "Oh, Miss Cherry — I don see him. Hit don Mista Bill. He don heah." Sincy cried out this last as she returned quickly to the room, having barely left it.

"Ah, go on there, Sincy," laughed Cherry, scolding her good-humoredly. "Sometimes you act like an idiot!"

Bill was already coming in the hall door at the back.

"Good evening, Cherry," he said in his firm, manly voice.

"Hello, Bill —" Cherry said smiling affectionately at him. She flashed Sincy a look which sent the girl to where she had been told to go.

"Cherry. I am so glad to see you," Bill said earnestly as they walked on toward the parlor.

"And I am happy to see you," Cherry assured him. "Bill, you sound hoarse. Do you have the grip?" She looked at him concernedly. He was tall, with broad shoulders and looked very handsome. "You look so clean and nice in your suit. Won't you sit down?"

"No, Cherry," he said nervously. "I haven't the time to sit. I am in such a hurry. Cherry, I have been compelled to lie out so long. I have been exposed to so much cold and wet weather until it is a thousand wonders that I haven't already died. Cherry, I have spent months since I last saw you, lying and thinking of you. I can't stand it any longer. I've got to do something else." There were tears in his eyes. He reached in his pocket, apparently searching for a handkerchief, but found he had none. "Cherry, I want to ask you something, dear," he continued.

A moment later his arms were about her, gently.

"Yes, Bill, what is it?" she asked, looking up into his eyes, showing the love she had for him.

"Cherry — I can't stay here any longer," he told her. "Them home-guards are going to find me and maybe kill me. I've just been waiting for spring so I could —" he choked on the words.

"Go on, Bill," Cherry coaxed.

"Oh, I am afraid, Cherry, that you don't understand." He fidgeted nervously with his pocket.

"Understand what, Bill?" Cherry tried to encourage him to tell her what she wanted to hear.

"I have been wanting to do this for a whole month and have thought of it so much and planned it every day and

every night for a long time and I don't want to do it without I could tell you and ask you if — you'd —" He swallowed hard. "If you'd wait — for me?"

"I would like to hear your plans, Bill," Cherry prompted him, looking lovingly into his eyes.

"Cherry — would you not hate me if you knew that I was in the Yankee lines?" he asked, his lips trembling.

"But, Bill, you don't have to —" she tried to explain.

"Yes, Cherry — I must do something. I must get behind the lines of the Yanks, or in them, or somewhere. Cherry, I have almost been driven mad. I have been so sad, so hurt, to see my daddy shot down like a dog — and they shot at me, too. I couldn't even go to the house to see him buried or to comfort Mom. Cherry, I know that this may be the last time I'll ever get to see you. And what I do must depend on what you tell me this day. Could you forgive me if I go to the Yankee lines?" he asked solemnly.

"To fight against my own people and me?" Her eyes fell and she seemed shocked, hurt, pondering the question seriously.

"For God sakes, no, Cherry — to keep from fighting; to keep from killing — to keep from taking my own life!" His voice, was stronger.

"But would you not hate me, Bill, when you were in the Yankee lines and my daddy was in the Confederate Army?" Cherry asked, pale and trembling with emotion.

"Never, Cherry — I'd always remember and long to come back to you. If I had to fight, I'd get them to let me go to New Orleans or Philadelphia, or some place where I wouldn't have to fight against your people."

She drew nearer to him again and his arm tightened about her. Her eyes met his — two big blue eyes in perfect accord with two pale bluish greys.

"Then you'll understand if I go?" he said, pale.

"Yes."

"And if I get killed, you'll forgive me?"

"Yes, Bill," she said, trying to smile.

"And, Cherry — if God is with me and I can be fortunate enough to come back, will you still let me come to see you?" His arms tightened again and she did not struggle to withdraw from his embrace.

"I will, Bill," she breathed softly.

"You'll be true, Cherry — you'll be faithful?"

"Bill," she said, nestling close to him, "I love you. Yes, Bill — I'll always wait for you and give myself to no one but you. Now, Bill — when you leave here, go — any place that is safe as quickly as you can. Stay till the war is over — then, when there is peace, come back — to me. I'll be waiting for you — and you have my vow that I'll be faithful — always!"

"As I will be to you, dearest one." And Bill pressed his lips reverently, lovingly upon hers.

Cherry sighed in ecstasy, closing her eyes.

At this point Sincy came running in, crying excitedly, "Lor, Miss Cherry — Lor, Honey Chile — Lor, Miss Cherry — yonder don come — Lor Miss —"

"For good heavens, Sincy — what on earth?" Cherry cried, going to meet the girl. Then she heard the rumble of horses' hooves coming up the road toward the house.

She felt the impact of Bill's body against hers as he ran from the room and out the back hall door. Cherry ran to the front door, hoping to block as much of the view of

the newcomers through the door as she could. It was a big unit of cavalry and Partisan Rangers. They were stopping in front of their yard.

"Oh, did someone tell?" she moaned. "Do they really know Bill was here at my house?" She was panic-striken. "One instant and Bill will be gone! They won't be able to find him!" she gasped to Sincy.

Then her hopes were dashed as she saw one of the men in the back of the line ride out of the road and start shouting savagely, "Yonder he is, men! Yonder he is!" and the whole pack was in swift pursuit of Bill.

Cherry ran to the back door to watch, her heart standing still in her breast. She clutched her hands to her throat. "Oh, dear Lord!" she prayed. The horses were overtaking Bill — another minute and he would be in the woods, with a better chance for safety. "Oh, I hope they won't shoot him — Oh, Lord, save him!" she prayed.

She saw Bill turn to the left. As he did so, she saw the horses bump him, knocking him to the ground. A dozen of them ran over him. She screamed in terror as it seemed the horses would trample him to death or at least cripple him for life.

Mrs. Parker had been awakened by the noise and came to the door. "What in the world is the matter, Cherry?" she asked wonderingly, and then she saw the men leaping from their mounts with rope to tie their prisoner.

"Who is it, Cherry?" she asked.

"Oh, Mother, it is Bill! Poor Bill!" She turned and ran back to her room, unable to watch the awful spectacle. "They've caught him and they will kill him for sure! Oh, oh, oh!" She lay at first prone on her bed, then leaped up and pressed her face against the window to try and see what would be Bill's fate.

They slung Bill astride a horse with his hands tied behind him. They tied him to the saddle and rode away, leading the horse.

Cherry watched them out of sight, then threw herself over her bed again and lay there weeping bitterly. She prayed that the men would be merciful to Bill — merely place him in jail and give him five days to join up. But more likely they were already on their way to some place to hang him — or perhaps butcher him as they'd done to his father. She had heard that Bill had shot at some of the home-guards at the time they had killed his Pa. Yes, they would be sure to butcher him.

"Oh, how can they be so brutal?" she cried, her mind flashing back to the scene of the men riding Bill down and trampling their horses over his prone, writhing body as it lay on the ground.

"Don't cry, Miss Cherry, Honey. Sincy will be wid yo, chile!" Sincy tried to comfort her, stretching herself on the bed beside her.

"Sincy — I can't help it," Cherry burst out, wailing loudly. "Did you see how they ran their horses over that poor boy a while ago?"

"Yessum, Miss Cherry." Sincy was caressing her with gentle patting and wiping her hair from her eyes. "I know, Miss Cherry — Massa don say de home gods are good men — dat de Tories are de bad uns. Miss Cherry, yo an' I say de home gods are de worse!"

"They are going to kill him, Sincy! They are going to murder him!" cried Cherry.

"Lor, Miss Cherry — dey shan't do dat!" Sincy hugged her close, trying to reassure her.

Just then Mr. Parker returned and entered the house. As Cherry heard his steps, she burst out into louder weeping and her father heard her.

"What is Cherry crying about, Sincy?" he asked, as he saw her on passing her door.

"Lor, Massa Parker — de worsest thing yo eber did see don happen. Dem home gods don run rite ober Mista Bill wid dar hosses. Dey took him on to kill him!" Sincy was wringing her hands in excitement.

"Cherry!" Mr. Parker called in a firm, angry voice, "What do you mean? Has that Bill Walker been here again?"

Cherry made no reply to his question, but continued crying loudly, broken-heartedly. Sincy was standing at the foot of her bed looking from Cherry to Mr. Parker.

"I hope the home-guards and cavalrymen get rid of that Tory!" Mr. Parker cried bitterly, "He's too low-down to be worth the powder and lead it would take to kill him. And you, young lady, are as worthless as he is — you are certainly putting yourself to very poor deeds in sympathizing with him!" He turned and went on to his room.

Sincy lay beside Cherry again and began to cuddle her into her arms. Cherry's body shook with rigors as pains of grief seized her. She lay there till late in the night still sobbing and crying till her pillow was wet with tears.

The next morning Cherry was pale and sick. She didn't come to the table for breakfast at all. Her mother, worried about her, came to her room and sat down beside her and smoothed her hair back from her damp, feverish forehead.

"Cherry, you simply must try to get over this — you are making yourself sick and it won't do you any good. Can't you forget that scene of yesterday?"

"Oh, Mother, how can I forget?" the girl wept. "That was so sickeningly brutal — so unnecessary! We have been told all the time of how low and mean the men are who won't go and fight for the South — but that one incident is enough to make me hate every home-guard and cavalryman in the country. Bill is a good boy and you know it, Mama, and he shouldn't have been treated like that. It's not a matter of his help they are needing or wanting in the army. If it were, they had better be there themselves. It is just a matter of their cruelty and wanting to punish the innocent for their own cruel deeds."

"But dear, if they didn't make the folks go to the army, we would be sure to lose the war and we would all be ruined," her mother reasoned.

"We ought to lose! I hope we do lose — if that is their means of winning. Them men don't deserve anything but to lose! They are beastly — cruel, heartless! It isn't right to keep other human beings for slaves, even if they are black!" Cherry sobbed passionately, turned over and buried her face once more in her pillow.

* * *

Bill Walker, however, had not yet been killed, but taken to prison along with some four other young men — and was being held there for five days, in which time they could make up their minds to join the Rebels or be shot. It was about the same as a death sentence, for none of the five had any intentions of being forced into the Confederate Army. The five were, Jim Curtis, Bill Walker, Doc Baird, George Stewart and Jim Brooks — and each one

of them swore they'd die before allowing themselves to be forced to do something against their principles.

Their friends heard of their capture and were not idle, but immediately got together to see what they could do to effect a rescue — but this seemed a rather hopeless task.

When Cherry heard Bill was still alive she pleaded again with her father for his release, but he remained adamant. And the poor girl continued to refrain from eating, saying she just couldn't force a bite down her throat when she thought of the man she loved awaiting his death sentence to be carried out, in a miserable prison cell. And she grew weaker and weaker.

Judge Parker finally tried to pacify the girl, pretending he would intercede. But he had no intention of doing so and merely wished to keep the news of Bill's death from his daughter, when it happened.

Chapter XV

THE RESCUE

Bill Looney, as usual, was called upon to act as messenger in an emergency. The present emergency was the five young men held prisoners with execution hanging over their heads within a few days. Bill could always be depended on to get through with his message. So it was that he one day appeared at the headquarters of the Federal Army in Decatur, tired and exhausted and made his presence known to one of the pickets, who escorted him to the office.

"Here is a man, sir — wants to see one of the generals," the picket introduced Bill.

"What's your name, Mister?" one of the colonels asked him.

"My name is Bill Looney, if ye got any business wid my name," said Looney frank and to the point, and a bit gruff at the delay. "I want to see General Thomas, General Streight, or General Mitchell right away. It's mighty important business, too, I got!"

"Right this way, sir!" The colonel recognized Bill's name and led him without further delay into General Mitchell's office.

"Good morning," General Mitchell said politely, smiling at Bill. "And what is it this time?"

"Howdy, General. I got to ax ye fer a favor. We got a bunch uv young men in jail down at Jasper in Walker County. Them damn Rebs air agonna shoot them day

atter to-mor, if we don't get them saved. I want ye to give me a bunch uv them men what air in here from Winston and let em go back down thar and git them men outin' that jail fore them damned Rebs can shoot them."

"Who are they and what evidence have you to authorize this request?" Mitchell asked him.

"I don't know the names uv em, except Jim Curtis is in the bunch and I know they air agonna be shot day-atter to-mor, if they ain't got outa thar. Cause them Rebs, old Stoke Roberts an' his gang, ain't agonna let a one uv em live what won't go to that Rebel army." Looney's black eyes sparked impatiently.

"I am afraid it is going to take a few days to see about this," Mitchell explained. "We will have to take it up with Jeremiah Clements, who is the regional advisor for this section and get him to petition General Sherman at Huntsville."

"A few days, Hell!" Looney stepped close and glared into General Mitchell's face. "They ain't no few days to it. They put em in jail Monday and just give them till Friday to join the Rebel army or be shot. Here it is done Wednesday and they air agonna be shot Friday! We've got to git them men outa thar tomorrow or it'll be too damn late!"

"But hold on here," General Mitchell cautioned. "We have regulations that we must abide by in our operations."

"Regulations, the dickens!" Bill made no attempt to conceal his contempt for the delay. "As many men as I have helped to git in this army — I bet I have brung over two hundred men to these Yankees — and ye never had to have no damn orders to take nairee one uv em! And then when we need some uv these men to keep a bunch

from bein' shot, ye got to have a passel uv damn orders! I say to hell with ye orders. We got to have some men and git em quick! If ye got any business around here, ye oughter git busy and give me the men and if ye ain't, yer oughter let me go ahead and git the men what we need and go on our way. Yer orders and dillyin' around here ain't agonna git us no ways uv savin' them men!"

"Can't you get a group of men there and get these men out?" Mitchell questioned hedgingly.

"General, yer a damn poor man, I'd say, fer helpin' a bunch that has helped ye as much as we'ns in Winston uv helped in this war. Shore, we could git some men, but we ain't got no guns what'd be wurth a damn if we met old Stoke and his men, and we ain't got no horses what are fit to fight wid and we need some and need 'em now!"

Mitchell smiled, realizing the sense the man spoke. He turned to another man, "Colonel Emery," he said, writing an order, "I want you to take this order to Colonel G. E. Spencer of the First Alabama Cavalry regiment." He turned back to Looney, "And where will you meet these men in the morning?" he added.

"We'll meet them at Old Rocky Plains, just west of the Cheathem Road below Double Springs. And we'll have a bunch uv men to go with em," Looney told him.

"Well, you go on back and get as many of these men there as you can and we will have a group of men there in the morning to help you," Mitchell assured him.

"Much oblige, General. Ye shore wanta git em thar by tomor, cause them Rebels ain't agonna wait," Looney reminded him as he got ready to leave.

* * *

It was the following morning — Bill Looney had headed back to contact various men he knew would need to

be in the work of rescuing the five prisoners. So it was he came to Tom Gartman's home. Jonathan Barton and Willis Farris were there, too, and Ida — and had been talking about what was happening to Chris Sheets, who was still a prisoner at Montgomery. It looked, according to reports they had, like Chris was to be kept a prisoner until the end of the war and Chris was plenty mad, for he wanted to be out and able to do some good for the cause — the Union.

The group at Gartman's started up in surprise at the appearance of Looney.

"Men!" Looney cried as soon as he had regained his breath enough to speak, having come far and fast. "There's a bunch of Yankees a'comin' to meet us over at Rocky Plains to go wid us to Jasper to git that bunch uv boys out'n that danged jail fore them blame Rebels can take them out and shoot em!"

"We haven't got any mule or horse to ride and I can't walk it," Barton said.

"Well, I've got a pretty fair nag out there, if anybody wants to ride it," offered Gartman.

"Let me have it. I'll go with the men," Farris offered quickly, and ran to the barn to get Gartman's horse and saddle to go along with Looney.

"Them men are in for some tough times," Barton observed to Gartman as the two stood at the yard gate and watched the men ride away. "If they meet up with old Stoke Roberts and his gang, there'll be a real fight here in Winston or Walker Counties!"

"Oh, I hope there is a big army of them and they don't stop till they have gone on and captured Montgomery!" Ida cried as she came running to the porch. She had been

standing by an open window listening to the conversation.

* * *

Eleven men were already waiting at Rocky Plains when Looney and Farris rode up.

"Whar's them Yankees?" Bill wanted to know.

"You're the one who said they were coming. You ought to know," Frank Curtis cut in.

Bill slid off of his little mule and slumped down on a rock against a tree and was asleep in a minute, after reassuring the men the Yanks would be coming.

Before long one of the group cried excitedly, "Yonder come the Yankees, men!"

Bill Looney slept on and the men decided that as he had already done so much they ought not to disturb him but let him get his much-needed rest. So, realizing they had quite a few men, and with the Yankees on fresh horses and with shining rifles, should be able to effect the rescue, they started forward on their mission.

As there were only fourteen horses and mules and twenty-six men, they had to take turns about riding and walking on the trip.

As they went along in the afternoon, still several miles from Jasper, a bad black cloud came up and then a heavy downpour of rain deluged the men.

"Hadn't we better stop till the rain is over?" one of the group yelled.

"No!" Frank Curtis shouted back. "We haven't any time to waste. Every minute we delay is just that much closer to them men's death."

"Yep, most likely old Stoke and his gang — old Ham Carpenter and Gibson and Humphrey's won't be expecting anybody to be out in this," Farris yelled through the rain which almost drowned out his words.

The rain lasted for almost an hour. The men and their horses were wet as could be. But as they reached the edge of the town the sun was coming out. A hot steam seemed to be rising from the ground. Captain Anderson Ward stopped the group when they were on top of the hill in the hill in the north part of the little town.

"Dismount, men!" he ordered those on the horses as they rode up. He, himself, was dismounting. He picked up a stick on the side of the road, the men watching him anxiously. "Men," he declared solemnly, "we have a risky job before us. We all know that it may cost us our lives —" he drew a line across the road with the stick, then said soberly, "Now, every one of you men who are willing to die for them men in that jail, step across it!"

Every man — twenty-six of them, stepped over.

Ward looked at them approvingly, then asked, thoughtfully, "How many guns do we have?" He counted them as the men held them up. "Eighteen rifles and six shotguns," he enumerated. "Now I want two of you that don't have guns to stay here with the horses. The rest of you line up in a V shape with the point in front, and let's go over this hill in regular time till the people see us and then start yelling at the top of our voices and run like hell!"

The men quickly formed the V and were off. They had gotten almost half down the hill when the women of the town first caught sight of them and began to scream.

"Yonder comes a Yankee Army!"

They began running with their children as fast as they could, continuing to shout to the people at every house they came to. The little creek in the east side of the town was spread all over the bottom from the rain. The women

were not even taking time to go to a foot log or the bridge but were running through the stream up to their waists and even to the necks of some of the children.

By the time the men reached the jail, all the residents of the town were gone, and even Gil Sides, the jailer, was nowhere to be found.

"Hunt a log, some of you men, while the rest keep your guns ready," Ward ordered. The men went about the place in search of the log.

Panic seized the young men inside the jail, at the sight of the men.

"Oh, Lord —" screamed Doc Baird, "Yonder comes old Stoke Roberts and his gang of home-guards!"

"Oh, mercy!" wailed Bill Walker, "They'll kill us as sure as we are here."

The five helpless boys were crouching hard against the wall of the jail house in desperation to escape the cruel tortures of the mob. Doc Baird ran to the bed and fell prostrate upon it.

"Hey, Jim!" a kind voice spoke.

Jim Curtis recognized the voice. It was his Uncle Frank Curtis calling.

"Good Heavens! Thank God!" Jim screamed, grabbing the others by their arms, "It's our own folks. It's not them Rebels. They've come to rescue us!" Jim was excited beyond words when he realized who it was.

They all ran to the window, almost in a fit of gladness at the prospects of being freed. Tears of joy were streaming down every cheek as the young men embraced and kissed each other passionately.

"Oh, God — I am so glad you've come!" Doc Baird cried as he looked out the barred window and saw who it was.

"We first thought it was old Stoke Roberts and his home-guards — and that our doom was near," Jim Curtis added.

Twelve of the men came from the woods a good distance away, bringing a big saw-stock. They rammed the door, but it held firm.

"Ram it again!" the group shouted.

The second time the big log hit it, its hinges gave.

"Ram it again!" another burst of voices cried.

The third time the log burst away the hasp and the door swung open. A moment later and the five prisoners came running out of the jail shouting and hugging their liberators in a frenzy of joy.

The eyes of the entire group were moist with tears.

And just then Frank Curtis stepped around the side of the jail and set up a cry as he sighted Gil Sides a short distance off with his gun.

"Drop that gun!" he ordered. In a moment the jailer was covered by a dozen rifles and guns and had to lower his own gun.

"Come on down here, Gilbert!" Farris ordered.

Sides walked slowly toward the jail and the men took his gun away from him.

"Now, Sides," Curtis warned, "there is a good place to build a fire! Right there in the corner of that jail. You can pile all the quilts and shuck beds together. I believe they will be enough to start it right."

"Here is ye a chunk of fire," one of the men shouted. He had already run to one of the houses and was bringing a large stick of wood with a blaze on the end of it.

"Listen, men — I haven't harmed any of you. I am too old for this," Sides began to protest.

Five or six of the men drew their guns on him menacingly.

"Set her afire, Gil! Set 'er afire!" they demanded. And so, as there was nothing else for him to do, he took the fire and stuck it into the pile of quilts and straw beds. In a little while a crackling, blazing fire was shooting through the roof.

"Now, Sides, you can start running," Doc Ingle told the jailer.

"Oh, please, men, have mercy — have mercy! I haven't harmed —" the man screamed, trembling.

"Be running, Sides," Jim Curtis, one of the men who had been freed, told him.

At this, Gilbert Sides dodged around the corner of the burning jail and ran for his house. When he was some twenty-five or thirty steps away, ten or twelve of the men fired into his body. He stumbled to the ground, dead.

"Now, the thing we ought to do," spoke Jim Curtis, "is to go back and hunt down every one of them men who put us in this cussed jail and kill the last one of them."

"That is right," agreed Jim Brooks. "But the devil that I want to get worse than anybody is that old Doc Kaiser. He's the devil that sent them men to kill my daddy. I want to get him first!"

"While we're all together with these guns and horses, we ought to hunt old Stoke Roberts and his men and shoot the daylights out of the whole bunch of them," Frank Curtis suggested as they were starting back toward their horses.

"Well, I'll tell you, men," Captain Anderson Ward told them, "we don't have any set time that we are re-

quired to be back in Decatur. But we have done now what we have been sent here to do. So these men that came with me and I will have to go on back and report at the Federal Headquarters."

The group mounted their horses, taking turns about riding and walking and started back for Winston County. As they crossed the Cheathem Ford on Clear Creek, Jim Brooks hailed the crowd and shouted:

"Hey, men — turn to your left when you get up here to the Kaiser Road. We are agoing by there and settle a debt with that old scoundrel!"

The other men were all of the same mind, so when they reached the Kaiser Road, they all turned and went westward toward Brown's Creek Bottom.

It was nearly dark when they reached Kaiser's house. The old doctor was sitting on his porch, looking over some papers. He had not seen the men until they were already close to his yard fence. As he saw them, he looked at them as though he must have thought they were a group of the Partisan Rangers. But as they came closer, he saw the Yankee uniforms and jumped up to run into the house. But he never got to safety. As he leaped for cover, Jim Brooks grabbed one of the rifles and shot him through the heart. Kaiser fell there on his own porch and was dead in a minute. His wife heard the shot and come running out of the house to see her husband lying on the floor writhing in his death struggles.

"Oh, mercy, mercy!" she screamed and ran to him in a fit of anguish.

"Hold on there, old Mrs. Kaiser!" Jim Brooks told her as he and the rest came up to the porch, "if you will talk, you can live. Otherwise, you, too, will die!"

She looked up at them through tear-filled eyes. "What is it men, what do you want? Oh, let me call the Negroes to come and lay Andrew on the bed!" She was wringing her scarf in her hands, winding it through her fingers in a mechanical fashion.

"The thing I want to know is, who were the six men old Kaiser sent the other night to kill my pa and throw him off that bluff?" Jim Brooks demanded.

The other men were standing around silently all the time holding their guns for any surprise attack.

"Who is your Pa, young man?" the old woman cried hysterically. She was still weaving her scarf back and forth through her fingers.

"Bill Brooks, that was killed the other night with Ruf Baird," Jim said sadly.

"And I want to know who they were, too. I am Doc Baird, Ruf's boy," Doc Baird said as he stepped up to the old lady.

"I'll tell you if I can," the old lady began. She was too excited to think. "I believe it was Jeff Hogan, Jim Smith, Hugh Lagron —" She hesitated for some time.

"Don't stop! I'll kill you dead as a hammer if you don't tell me every one of them," Jim Brooks cried, bitter in his demand for justice.

"Let me think —" Mrs. Kaiser pleaded, trembling. "Then there was — Bob South, Sherm Williams, and Mike Gosey."

"I am going to get every one of them devils if it takes me the rest of my life to do it!" Jim Brooks vowed.

It was already dark and the men were tired from their riding and walking.

"We've got to go," Captain Ward told the men. "Do

any of you want to go back with us to the Yankee lines?" he finished.

"I do!" shouted Jim Curtis.

"I do, too!" Bill Walker joined him.

"I want to stay here and spend the rest of my days hunting down them brutes that this old woman just named," Jim Brook declared firmly.

So it was, the others went with the men who lived in Winston County as they separated to go to their homes. And Bill Walker and Jim Curtis climbed up on two of the horses behind Yankee soldiers and started for Decatur.

* * *

The home-guards slipped up the next night and burned the house of Clark Howell, who had been one of the first to skip to Yankee lines and was in the group who'd come back with Anderson Ward.

And the following night a group of the Tories, led by Buck West and Bill Weatherford, burned the home of Dr. Kaiser.

Mrs. Kaiser went to the home of Judge Parker after her house was burned down.

Judge Parker met her kindly. "Mrs. Kaiser, you have a home here with us as long as we have one or as long as you care to stay," he assured her.

"Thank you so much, Judge," said the old woman. "I appreciate your generous offer, and it does look like I'll be obliged to stay with you for a while. There's no chance of getting a home built back. And it would probably be no use to build it back now, anyway."

Cherry was greatly interested in finding out things from the old woman. When her father was gone from the room, she took the woman aside. "Mrs. Kaiser, did you

know any of the men that came to your house when your husband was killed?" she asked.

"I believe that I recognized some of them," the poor woman replied. "I believe that Clark Howell was with them and Peter and Doc Ingle and Frank Curtis."

"Did you know any of the men that had been taken from the jail?" Cherry asked next.

"Well, if I remember, it was Jim Brooks who was in that jail that shot Dr. Kaiser and threatened to kill me." She shuddered as she told the story. "Yes, threatened to kill me if I didn't tell him who the Doctor had sent to kill his daddy. Doc Baird was along, too, and I am not sure that I knew any of the rest."

"You don't know then whether Bill Walker went with the Yankee soldiers or not?" Cherry was resting her hand upon the shoulder of Mrs. Kaiser in sympathy.

"No, I can't tell you, honey. It was already getting dark and I was so broken up because of the death of my husband. But I believe I do remember two men getting on the horses behind the Yankee soldiers when they rode off."

Cherry went to her room wondering if one of these could have been Bill going back with the Yanks to the Federal lines.

"At least, I am so glad they didn't kill him. And if Bill is still in the country, he will come back to see me, somehow. He was all ready to go to the Yanks when he came here the other day, and I am sure he went if he had a chance," she concluded, feeling better.

Chapter XVI

THE REBELS CELEBRATE

During the spring of 1863, the Federals had moved back into north Alabama under the leadership of General Grenville M. Dodge and had captured Tuscumbia and Town Creek. General Abe D. Streight with two thousand picked troops was sent to Rome, Georgia, through Alabama, to capture the city and Commissary of Confederate supplies.

General Bragg had sent General Bedford Forrest from the Confederate headquarters in Tullahoma, Tennessee, to intercept Streight south of Florence, Alabama. General Forrest was some sixteen miles behind Streight when he started pursuit and over a four days battle fought a superior force of the Federals until on May 1st, 1863, he captured them on Blunt's Plantation, fifteen miles east of Gadsden. The capture of nearly seventeen hundred Federals by a force of only six hundred Confederates was heralded as one of the greatest feats in military history.

R. W. Walker, an outstanding leader of the people in Walker County, was visiting Judge Parker and family in the latter part of May. Parker had called in others of the people of Winston and Marion Counties to confer with Walker while he was there. Among these were Judge Oran Davis, Alex Underwood of Thorn Hill, and Sam Noles of Larissa Community.

"Well, what do you think of the daring chase and vic-

tory of Forrest over Streight and his Yankees?" Davis asked Walker as the group seated themselves on Parker's porch.

"That feat, sir, will go down in history as one of the greatest military exploits of all times," Walker declared enthusiastically. "I fully believe that the title, 'Wizard of the Saddle,' which has been given him, has already been justified. We must all admit that he is certainly without a peer when it comes to convincing the enemy of the utter futility of gambling with his power and genius. If the Yankees had just one general that was half as elusive and skilled as he is, they would already have us licked."

"Yes, and if the Confederacy had half of the equipment to fight with that Grant or General Sherman either one has had and Forrest could get a hold of it, he would kill or capture every Yank in America before the summer is over," interrupted Sam Noles.

"It seems to me, gentlemen, that we people of this section are so deeply indebted to him that we should seek some means of repaying him," suggested Judge Oran Davis.

"That would be next to impossible," declared Judge Parker. "There is not sufficient wealth in all the land to repay him."

"We could at least repay him our debt of gratitude, don't you think?" questioned Alex Underwood.

"And in assurance of our continued backing and moral support," continued Mr. Walker.

"Yes, and in marshaling the forces of men and women of this section behind the efforts of such gallantry," added Mr. Davis.

"I will admit that there is something that is badly needed in these parts," conceded Mr. Parker. "If it would

help in rallying the folks of Winston County to the cause of the Confederacy, it would sure be worth trying."

"Well, there is certainly not a breast in this country where the heart is still beating in it, that can fail to be touched by the story of such heroic deeds," Mr. Walker assured him. "Besides the things done by Forrest, there are other acts of heroism or maybe we should call it 'Heroinism,' that are sure to touch the pride and patriotism of every woman in this whole country."

"You mean the story we've been hearing of the Widow Sansom's daughter?" Davis questioned.

"Yes, and also the account of the two Murphree sisters, who captured the three Yankee soldiers and drove them into General Forrest's camp with their own guns?"

"It seems that there is so little we could do though in this section to let people know about them things," Underwood reminded them.

"There is one sure way," Sam Noles suggested, "and that is, we could have a picnic celebration around here some place and have someone to tell these things to the people."

"That's a good idea, sure!" Oran Davis was on his feet with a feeling of inspiration. "We could have a picnic here in Winston or Marion and Walker Counties and invite all the folks from these counties and have some of the men who were with Forrest there to make us a speech and in that way we would be sure to elicit the cooperation and help of every patriotic citizen around here."

"That ought to be such as would get the enthusiasm of the women aroused here, too," Underwood proposed.

"Do you think we might have some of these soldiers here for the celebration?" asked Judge Parker.

"Why, of course, that depends on a lot of things, such as the military engagements and where the Yanks are and so on," reasoned Walker. "I believe that if it was possible for the Yanks to be engaged in Tennessee or Kentucky and against Bragg or Lee, we might even get all the soldiers who were with Forrest here, too, to make us a speech and tell the story."

"That would be the finest thing that ever happened in this section in getting the people to respond," Sam Noles cried enthusiastically.

"We ought to try it," agreed Alex Underwood.

"Where and when can we have it?" asked Noles.

"I'd say let's have it right here in Winston or Walker County," Oran Davis suggested hopefully. "And we can have it any time."

"Well," thought Mr. Walker, "it is going to take some little time to get recognition from the higher officials if we wish to get the men a furlough so they can come home. Perhaps we could get ready by the Fourth of July and we could have it anywhere. It may be, though, that the upper officers are going to be a little shy about our having it in either Winston or Walker Counties after that Jasper incident the other day, and the killing of poor Dr. Kaiser by that raid."

"Poor Doc!" Parker looked sad as the incident of Kaiser's death was brought to mind. "We miss the old Doc so much planning things like this. If we could do it, I would feel more like getting an army together and capturing that bunch with old Spencer and killing the last one who was in that raiding party!"

"Let's have it on or near the line of Walker and Winston Counties," proposed Noles.

"That would be fine," agreed Walker, "and when I get back to Walker County, I will confer with others of the leaders there and we will make an appeal to Bragg or General Johnston, whichever one that Forrest and his men are assigned to and see if they won't give the men leave to be with us on such an occasion."

"And we can appeal to them for this on the grounds that it will help in recruiting men and getting the services of the women of this section and they may be willing for us to try it." Judge Parker was glad to try such a proposal.

"Maybe we had better postpone any announcements of it until we find out from some of the Generals," suggested Mr. Walker, as he was getting ready to leave for his home.

Mr. Parker walked back into the house after the other men had gone. There he saw Cherry sitting in her rocking chair staring blankly into space.

"We have just been talking of something which I believe you will like, Cherry," he spoke to her softly.

Cherry looked at her father interestedly, but made no reply. She was looking at some remembrances which she had collected. Among these were the cedar chest which Bill had given her and a letter she had received from him while she was in Huntsville.

Mr. Parker turned to speak to her further, but changed his mind and walked on into his wife's bedroom, where she still lay in bed. He was disappointed that Cherry had shown no inclinations toward what he had told her — no enthusiasm whatsoever.

They talked for awhile and he told her about the plans he and the other men had just made.

"We have just been discussing the possibility of having a victory celebration somewhere in this section the Fourth

of July and inviting all who will to attend from this county and Walker and Marion," he said. "I think this would be fine, especially if we could have the boys who were with Forrest home and have either Forrest or some of his officers on the occasion. I surely do hope that you'll be able to attend." She had not been feeling very well of late.

"I hope so," she said in a sad, weak voice.

"Dear," Judge Parker continued in a serious voice, "we have just got to do something, if we can, to get our poor Cherry interested in going to this."

His wife looked at him strangely. "You will talk to her, then, about it sometime and when you tell her about it, she will no doubt let you know if she is interested."

"Listen, Mama," his voice was unsteady, "I have tried already to tell her about it. I spoke to her about our plans a moment ago and she showed no interest in such, at all. In fact, I have not been able to talk to her about anything since the day that young Tory was caught here and put in jail. She has been acting so strangely, so quiet. It is just like she is beside herself all the time."

"But, Nathan, you should not allow her to prevent your plans and the celebration if you want to help."

"Allow her — the nothing!" His tone of voice suddenly changed to one of bitterness. "How in the world can I help it? One can't help being prevented from doing a lot of things that he would like to do for his state and country when he is tied down by his family and doesn't have the support or even the good wishes of them in his work."

"You do admit then, Dear, that there is some degree of a person's welfare that is dependent upon the feelings and the treatment of others?" Mrs. Parker turned in her bed to watch the expression of her husband in reply to this question.

"I know what you mean," he answered in a loud, rasping voice. "There is no use, though, for you to be throwing this up to me. I haven't mistreated anybody. I am not to blame for the treatment of these blasted Tories! Why in the H—— can't I get my own folks to understand this?" He walked from the room almost in a rage.

* * *

About the first of June, Judge Parker received a letter from Mr. Walker in regard to the celebration. He had just finished reading the letter when Cherry came into the room where he and Mrs. Parker were sitting.

"Cherry," he spoke to her pleasantly, "I have a letter here from Mr. Walker telling us that we people of this section of Winston, Walker and Marion Counties are to go ahead and make plans for the picnic and victory celebration for General Forrest and his boys from this section; that General Bragg has requested of General Joseph E. Johnston, a furlough for the men and he feels sure it will be granted."

Both the Judge and his wife looked expectantly at Cherry, but she did not show any particular enthusiasm over the news.

"I just wonder if you and Mama might not want to go over to the Walker's about the middle of June and visit and help them in getting ready for the picnic?" he suggested.

"Pappa, I just don't want to go at all," declared Cherry in a pensive mood. Tears began to come into her eyes, showing that her reply was not prompted by a spirit of rebelliousness. She turned her face away, rose and started from the room. Her father watched her closely. She was crying aloud as she went to her room.

"I wish we could do something for the girl," her father sighed, "but it seems hopeless. We just can't allow her to stay here and not go to the celebration. People are already looking upon us as compromisors with the Tories. I have been defeated so many times already in trying to serve the Confederacy until I have been dropped from the list of responsible leaders."

Judge Parker was morose and a bit sad. "I have tried my best to retain the respect of my family and at the same time help in the conflict until it looks as though I have failed in both," he lamented.

"And yet there is no one to blame for it when you remember that there are so many things that we have already lost that are far more priceless than the fruits of victory," commented Mrs. Parker, studying one of her suits with the prospects of altering it for additional wear.

"I think that I am determined that Cherry shall go," Mr. Parker continued. "To me, it seems a most incredible thing that she should fail throughout the war to make one contribution to the welfare or appreciation for what our boys have done in the service. She could at least pay her respects to their gallantry and compliment them with her presence." He seemed determined.

His wife smiled sardonically at him. "I am not sure that if she were forced to go, that her presence would be a compliment to anything," she said. "If it were, it seems to me that her actions would be only another monument to the broken relations and the evils that war has wrought among us."

"And you won't even go?" Judge Parker was exasperated at her statement. "You are just like Cherry about going — you don't want to do anything that would give any consolation to our servicemen. You haven't done one

thing since the start of the war except uphold these scoundrels around here who wouldn't go, and keep me here as much of the time as you could."

Judge Parker slammed the door behind him as he hurried from the room.

* * *

It was Friday morning, July Fourth. A crwod of several hundred persons had gathered near the Walker and Winston County line south of Fall Creek for the celebration. There were also folks there from Cullman, Marion, and Fayette Counties. It was a clear, hot day, not a cloud to be seen in the sky.

Cherry had been forced to attend after all, and she had come with her father early that morning. When they arrived, the crowd was already assembled and a wagon was being pulled into the middle of the group to act as a speaker's platform.

"Aren't you getting out, Cherry?" Judge Parker asked, having alighted and turned to wait for the girl to climb from the carriage so that Zeb could drive out to some shade tree and mind the horses during the day.

"I think I'll wait for a while," Cherry answered in a toneless voice. "I'll have Zeb hitch the team close so I can watch and listen from the carriage.

Mr. R. W. Walker had just been asked to introduce the speaker and was climbing into the wagon bed to make the speech of introduction. Mr. Parker was in a hurry to be present before the introduction was made.

"I hope I get to see General Forrest, I've heard so much about him," Cherry said to Zeb. "Get the carriage turned so I can look toward the group in the wagon."

She had failed to see any young people that she knew.

She now listened carefully for the announcement. Mr. Walker was ready to start.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried, "you will no doubt feel as badly about it as I do when I tell you that we will not be honored today with the presence and speech of our distinguished General, 'The Wizard of the Saddle.' However, you will take courage with me when the name of our very distinguished speaker for the occasion is announced. It is with the very deepest and most solemn regret that we receive the news of General Forrest's tired and worn condition, which prohibits his coming for our celebration and to receive our gratitude for his most noble and signal victory over our enemy. In the absence of our great friend and leader, whom we have looked forward with such great anticipation to seeing — we have with us today one of our own section. The man who, next to General Forrest, is the one most worthy to be accredited with the victory. The man who so successfully resisted Dodge and his forces for ten days and wore them away and kept them from joining Streight at Town Creek is the one who helped General Forrest most in his pursuit of the enemy.

"My friends, it is a distinguished honor that I have of introducing to you, your great friend and mine, 'The Defender of North Alabama, Phillip D. Roddy!"

A thunder of applause greeted the introduction.

Captain Roddy arose, smiling, bestowed a cultured gesture and bow to the throng of his admirers.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he began, "in full appreciation for the fine introduction, I wish to extend my sincere regrets because of the absence of General Forrest. In turn, I want to tell you of one of the most daring and successful feats in military history.

"General Streight had been sent by Rosencraus from Nashville with two thousand picked and well-mounted troops to come through Alabama and march to Rome, Georgia. In order to cover this movement, General Dodge was sent in from Corinth, Mississippi to attack the Confederate forces in north Alabama. I, with my Fourth Cavalry and a few pieces of artillery, attacked and engaged these forces for ten days.

"General Bragg having heard of Dodge and his forces in Alabama, sent General Forrest to meet him. With several regiments, the 'Wizard of the Saddle,' crossed the Tennessee River at Brown's Ferry on April 26th and hurried on to Town Creek. On April 28th, a fierce artillery duel between eight guns of ours and eighteen of the Federals took place.

"About dark, soon after the battle of Town Creek, Mr. James Moon of Tuscumbia, came to General Forrest and me telling us that the day before some two thousand Federals had passed through Mount Hope and were then already in Moulton.

"General Forrest knew it was their intention to cut the railroad running from Chattanooga into Georgia and then capture Rome with the abundance of Confederate supplies. He then left Colonel Dibrell and a small force to divert the attention of Dodge. And we, under the 'Wizard of the Saddle,' after a hard day's fight, and only six hours of preparation, started in pursuit of General Streight. At one o'clock, on April 29th, as Streight and his bold raiders were marching out of Moulton, we were marching out of Courtland, sixteen miles behind him. He had two thousand troops, while we had only twelve hundred.

"On the night of April 29th, Streight camped at Day's Gap at the foot of Sand Mountain. We camped from midnight until day only four miles behind. They were surprised on the 30th as we attacked them. The battle finally became so fierce that we had to retreat a little. But when the entire force arrived, we soon had them in full retreat toward Bluntsville. It was night before we were able to overtake them again and force a fight. This was on Hog Mountain, where our firing on both sides was so rapid that it presented a grand spectacle. The fighting lasted until about ten o'clock when the Federals were driven off and forced to leave a couple of pieces of artillery which they had captured from us that morning.

"In this battle was displayed the greatest courage and skill of any man on earth. 'The Wizard of the Saddle' had one horse killed under him and two others wounded. Finally, the Yankees were driven a little further where they hid in ambush and waited for us again. It was three in the morning before we got word to rest. We were up again at sunrise and after them Yanks again.

"The Yankees had passed through Bluntsville at ten o'clock on May the first. Here one of the most noble and patriotic events happened that I have ever seen. As we were leaving the little town we saw two young ladies coming up marching three Yanks in front of them. They turned the three big young Yanks over to General Forrest. They had found these three Yanks asleep and had slipped up and got their guns and then awoke them and drove them in."

A round of applause came from the crowd.

"Who were they? Who were they?" came shouts of inquiry from the eager listeners.

"They were the Murphree sisters, I believe," the speaker continued. "Now, on with my story — ten miles east of Bluntsville we were able to overtake the Yanks and make them fight again. We were finally compelled to give a little ground, or at least we were held back till Streight and his men could cross the ford of the swift and dangerous Black Warrior River. It was then late in the afternoon and we had to rest and eat and feed our stock. We got only three hours rest until we were commanded to prepare for the night's march.

"Early the next morning we came to Black Creek, two miles west of Gadsden. There we found the Yanks had just crossed and were burning the bridge. The banks of the creek were high and steep. It seemed almost hopeless for us to try to cross. But General Forrest rode out to the house of Mrs. Sansom, a widow, who was standing at her yard gate with her two daughters. He asked them if there was any other way at all that we could cross. Here again I saw the greatest act of heroism — the younger of the two girls said, 'General, I know where there is a ford down in the field below the bridge. I have seen the cows cross it lots of times.'

" 'Give her a horse!' someone shouted. 'Let her show us where it is.'

" 'Come with me, Miss!' the genial General said as he rode up to a clay bank and the little lady jumped on his horse behind him.

" 'Do you have any men-folks?' Forrest asked her.

" 'One brother. He is in the Southern army,' she replied.

" 'Do you have any horses?' came the next question.

" 'We did have one till the Yankees got him a while

ago. Here it is —' She pointed to the ford they had just reached.

"When she had ridden across the creek with General Forrest, she showed him a path through a briar thicket and they were soon out into a clearing.

" 'We had better get down here, cause them Yanks may see us at any time,' she informed him.

"He dismounted and helped the girl off her horse, and just then the Yanks did show up and began firing a volley at them. And then the girl showed her resourcefulness by taking off her bonnet and waving it at the Yanks to show that it was a woman. A round of jeers and huzzas came from the Yanks. The girl now drew up her skirt to show General Forrest that a bullet had just passed through it.

" 'Get back here, Lass, I am glad to have you for a pilot, but I am not going to allow a woman to serve as a breast-work for me!' the General cried gallantly, stepping in front of her.

"The men were soon across. We hastened on — and by 9 A. M. the next day the Federals were completely fagged out and so were most of us. Besides, one of their best, Colonel Hathaway had fallen mortally wounded and they were so tired and sleepy that it was impossible for their commanders to arouse them for a fight.

"When the enemy sent a man to Forrest to demand our immediate surrender, we thought things over — and Forrest promptly gave orders and dispatched different men in such a way as to make the men think we had a large force.

"Finally, the enemy agreed to stack their arms and march into an open field. You should have seen their embarrassment and humiliation when they found that they

had surrendered to such a small force. Six hundred men who were yet with us had then captured over thirteen hundred. The next day two hundred and thirty men under Colonel Russell, who had been sent on to capture Rome, were also taken prisoners making a total of nearly seventeen hundred men captured in the two days.

"Friends, while this is a signal honor to the greatness of General Forrest, 'The Wizard of the Saddle,' it is also a great honor to these young men here in our audience, who had part in the daring and courageous fight which made such a victory possible.

"Your sons and brothers who are here with us, who had part in that victory, are certainly worthy of your honor and glory which you now bestow upon them. At the same time, your honor, which you are here bestowing is duly appreciated and will surely not fail to inspire every one of us on to a greater and finally a lasting victory over the enemies of our Southland.

"Again, I could not afford to close without paying respects to the brave and devoted ladies who have so nobly displayed acts of unsurpassed gallantry in the prosecution of this momentous victory. The undaunted courage of the Murphree sisters and the sweet little Emma Sansom should be as a beaconlight shining on the pathway and lighting the hopes and aspirations of every true southern woman in this country. Their courage and determination should be an example for every red-blooded person in the South to follow. Everyone present should this day resolve that we are going to give every ounce of devotion within our being to the prosecution of this war until the last enemy is driven from our soil."

A great ovation rung throughout the grounds for a long way.

Then the huge crowd that had come to the celebration began to prepare for their dinner which they had brought along in boxes and baskets.

Judge Parker went to the carriage for his. As he approached, he saw Cherry still seated and apparently asleep in it.

"Cherry, honey," he chided her gently, "how anyone can be so indifferent and unconcerned about such a happy group of people as this and such wonderful and patriotic speaking, is more than I am able to see." He tried to keep from scolding her as he said this.

She looked at him sadly, almost crying. "Pappa, I am so lonesome here! I wish so much that I had not had to come!"

"There is no use to be like this, Cherry," he told her impatiently. "Are you not going to help me spread the lunch?" he finished.

"I hope you will not force me to, Pappa." She was in earnest about it. "I feel as if I couldn't go through with it if you do."

As they were eating a few minutes later, several of the young soldiers from that section strolled by. They tried to be courteous and polite to her.

"Howdy, Cherry!" they waved and greeted as they came up to the carriage.

"Won't you have a lunch?" one invited.

Still she made them no reply.

"Gosh, girl, ye must be sick to sit there like that and all this fun going on," the soldier laughed heartily as he spoke.

Cherry was sick. Such jeers and taunts were more than she could stand. "Oh, how I do wish that I were away from here! I wish that I had never seen this place!" she

sobbed. "Why did I have to come? I can't stand these men — none of them. I wish that I could slip off from here and be home before Pappa could find me." She turned around as others came by to speak to her. "I wish I could have been sick this morning." She was glad that the persons coming along took her as being sick. She hoped that none of those coming by would find out why she had sat there all day.

Throughout most of the meeting, she sat in constant dread for fear of her father's retribution. She hated the time when he would come to the carriage to go home. She knew that he would chide her cruelly for her actions. Still, she preferred whatever he might say to any associations she might have had with those there. She even felt herself debased and mean because she could not force herself to accept at least part of the hospitalities of those present. She felt a guilt of conscience because she could not respond to the deeds of heroinism as the other women present had responded — no matter what she tried to think of the people, of the Murphrees and Emma Sansom and the other noble women of the Confederacy; the whole thing was distasteful and repulsive to her.

It seemed only to widen the breech between her and these people still further. Every time she looked toward the crowd with any degree of respect for their plans and their meeting, she was burned with a passion of hatred because of the sight of Stoke Roberts or Ham Carpenter or Al Gibson, or others of the cruel home-guards. She would hide her face in her hands and scream when she thought of these men in their hypocrisy, claiming to stand for democracy, freedom — when they had themselves committed the most dastardly acts that man could perpetrate. She hated the whole thing.

Chapter XVII

THE BLACK FOX

Things were no longer going all in favor of the home-guards. Some of the fellows who had lost their daddies, and others, had decided not to take things sitting down any longer, but to strike back in earnest, by stealth — instill terror into the hearts of the home-guards.

* * *

"Howdy, Judge," Harm Davis, who had come to the home of Judge Parker in great excitement, greeted the Judge. "I just wonder if you have heard the news of the shooting into the home-guards?"

"No, I haven't. What about it?" Parker inquired anxiously.

"Some of them Tories have gotten sneaking enough to slip close enough to the home-guards at night, when they have a fire built up, that they can shoot into them."

"Where did it happen, Harm?" Mr. Parker questioned.

"Down here about Gold Mines, somewheres. The home-guards, Ham Carpenter's group, were on a hillside west of Little New River with a big fire built up and the first thing anybody knew they heard a rifle crack and Mell Thomas fell over, shot through the right shoulder. Of course, they got him away from the light of the fire and hid as quick as they could to keep from being fired on again."

"When did that happen?" Parker asked next.

"Last night — Sam Noles told me. He said that a group of the men were out hunting around this morning for tracks and they found where someone had swam the little river and they found his tracks on both sides."

"Was Mell hurt very bad?" Parker showed signs of anxiety about the news.

"Noles said they thought he would die cause he was shot with a big minute ball that almost tore his right shoulder off of his body and he lost so much blood he was unconscious."

"Good Lord!" Parker rubbed his face in a very disturbed manner. "I hope them Tories haven't started that kind of tactics around here. We'll just have to inform Carpenter, Gibson and Roberts and their men not to be in bunches that way with a fire built up at night. They will have to stay in houses and not let people know where they are going to be at night. Besides, they will have to station pickets out around them and let the pickets lie in ambush and shoot them prowlers that come about them."

Parker began pacing the floor of his porch nervously. "Won't you come in?" he invited.

"No, Judge," Davis informed him, "I am on my way to Allen's factory on Bear Creek to try to get a few pieces of cloth to make the wife and children some clothes. You know my folks are getting almost naked for clothes. If this war keeps on we are all going to be naked around our place."

"Well, it looks like we are in for a tough winter. A lot of folks have been without salt for several months, except what they can get by boiling the dirt in their smokehouses and getting a little that way," Parker agreed. He went back into his house as Davis went on his way.

* * *

A few nights later, the home-guards were together in a house near the Hartsook Prison in North Fayette County. They had just built a fire in the big fireplace and were getting seated on the floor around it.

"Get the jug, somebody!" Bill Humphrey shouted.

George Harris leaped up and started for the big whiskey jug which he had set down in the corner as he came in. Just then a huge minute ball came tearing through the plank door of the house, hurling boards and splinters all the way across the room.

"Air ye hurt, George?" Stoke shouted as he saw Harris sprawled on the floor.

"No, but I'm scared as H——!" Harris cried, looking back toward the men.

"Fellers, we've jest got to find out who this is a'slippin' around here a'shootin' at us!" Squire Musgrove told the men.

"Don't none uv ye go out cause ye might git killed if ye do," Ruf Smith cautioned.

Just then another ball ripped through the same door, striking the wall just above Jim Mooney's head.

"God ——!" cursed Mooney. "That sounded like a cannon ball that passed my head! I'm gonna git outa here. I shore don't want to be hemmed up in here and be shot at like that!"

"Hey, men!" cautioned Stoke Roberts, "I believe there is just one man doin' that shootin'! Let's slip out at the back door and git outen here!" The men began crouching low and filing out toward the back door of the house.

Just about time enough for a reload had passed when another shot blazed out in the thicket and another ball banged through the door and out toward the group of men. Jim Mooney slumped to the ground and started

moaning, "I'm shot, men — I'm shot! Git me away from here!"

The men grabbed him and ran with him away from the house.

"Let's surround the house and woods and see if we can't slip up on that bush-whacking snipe!" suggested Wiley Russel.

"Not tonight," objected Squire Musgrove fearfully. "I ain't a'slippin' up on no man what's already hid wid a rifle like that snipe is shootin'!"

"We can post men around here and see if we can't find him when he moves," allowed Stoke Roberts.

"Where do you want a git t' wait fer him, Stoke?" George Harris asked tantalizingly. "Ye can hide anywheres ye want to fer all I care. I shore as H—— ain' a'goin' t' do no hidin' nowheres mysef! I'm goin' to my house and go to bed!"

All the men decided this was a good idea and headed for their homes, some of them taking the wounded Jim Mooney to his home in the southwest part of Walker County.

Jim Mooney, however, died before they could get him home.

This was but the beginning of what seemed an organized plan on the part of the Tories to even the score on the Rebel home-guards who had terrorized them so long.

Sam Noles who lived in the southern part of Brown Creek Bottom, just a few miles from Harm Davis, and who went from place to place making shoes and boots for entire families, came hurrying to Judge Parker's home early one morning in a panic of fright. He had been over in eastern Marion County near Mitchell's Fort.

"Lord, Judge —" he called breathlessly as he ran up on his porch, "have you heard what has happened over in Marion County?" He had to pause to get his breath.

"No, Sam, what is it?" Parker was anxious to learn the distressing news.

"There was a bunch of Tories and mossbacks that came through yesterday and raided the Mitchell Fort and tore the doors down and caught Al Gibson and took him off nobody knows where they took him, nor what they have done to him." Noles still seemed panic-stricken with fright.

"How did they manage to catch him?" Parker asked. "Why didn't he get away?"

"They shot him and he couldn't run nor he couldn't shoot them," Noles explained.

"Who told you? Did you see it?" Parker asked again.

"Jim Allen told me. He was passing when the men came along and Jim said they caught him and threatened to take him along, too, and some of the men knew him and told the leader to turn him loose."

"Who was the leader?" Did he know?"

"Yes, he said he was a fellow by the name of Stout. He said he was one of the biggest and meanest men he had ever seen." Noles was still nervous.

"My goodness!" Parker gasped. "What are we going to do now if that gets started?"

"Jim Allen said that there was a big bunch of them, fifteen or twenty. He never did get to see all of them and they were everyone of them armed with Enfield rifles and on good horses, some of them, and said that they were going to kill every home-guard and every Reb in the country!"

"Sam, we may as well get ready one of these days to go into the army. We are not safe here any more as we have been. If that gets started and them Yanks start letting men come back here to raid around like that, none of us will be safe." Parker was serious.

"I saw Ham Carpenter today and he said he wanted some of us to come and help him hunt Al up and bury him. He said he knew they would kill him somewhere."

"Well, Sam," Parker studied silently for a few seconds, "you know that I have always been a man to do my part in everything that I could, but I believe that there are other and more responsible duties for me — in fact, I have to make a trip to Jasper in the next few hours and I am sure I can't go at all."

Ham Carpenter and his men found Al Gibson, his remains rather, a short distance from the old Stamford Prison across Buttahatcha River from the Mitchell Fort

"My God —!" wailed Carpenter as they came upon the body lying beside a branch.

"Look how they killed him!" Rich Burleson said with a shudder. "He's got an iron wedge drove in his mouth and all the way through his head!"

"Poor old Al," another of the men lamented, "I knowed old Al would git it sooner or later!"

The men took the body to the fort and made him a plank coffin and buried him a short way from Fort Mitchell.

They had barely finished burying Gibson when Jeff Hogan and Joe Roberts came riding up to the fort.

"Men, we have just got to get some help to kill that bunch uv Tory raiders! They made another raid on the home-guards at the Hartsook Prison and killed Jim Smith!" shouted Joe Roberts.

"Good God!" Ham Carpenter cried, surprised and shocked. "Have they got that fur already?"

"They raided last night. Shot Jim Smith off uv his hoss," Hogan added. "We've shore got to git some help and git rid uv that bunch!"

"The trouble is," explained Jim Downey, "we can't never tell when and where they are going to strike next. The best thing we can do is find out where old George Stout stays and send a bunch there and kill him — he's the ringleader — then his band will be busted up."

"I'll tell ye the biggest trouble," interrupted Sam Noles, "there are too many of our own folks around here that's already getting scared to death and are quitting having anything to do with trying to kill that bunch! Why, the other day when I went by and told Judge Parker about Al Gibson being killed, he turned as pale as a corpse and when I mentioned coming over to help hunt his body, the Judge told me that he thought that there were more ways that he could help the country than helping hunt Al Gibson and them Tory bushwhackers!"

"Ya!" snarled Jim Beckner, "I guess the old devil is agittin' weak-kneed!"

"He is agittin' like old Alex Underwood and Judge Oran Davis, I guess," suggested Jim Downey. "They ain't a one of them been seen in this country in a month, since they heard that old George Stout has been in this country."

"I think a lota these men have took to stayin' down in Walker County most uv thar time," Jim Beckner put in. "Hit shore looks lak they've a lotta guts — runnin' off when somebody gits killed around here. Why, if a Yankee army wuz to come through here, they'd ever one leave the country!" Jim was thoroughly disguested with them.

A bit later Jim Allen came back to the fort as had been his custom for a long time, to come and see who was in prison or bring news of any events he had heard.

"What news ye got this time, Jim?" Ham Carpenter asked as he came up.

"Pretty bad! Pretty bad!" he assured the group. "Have ye not heard about Lang Allen's thread and cloth factory on Bear Creek being burned last night?"

"No — is that right?" several asked the question at the same time.

"Yes, it burned last night about midnight — whole thing was lost. They are sure that it was set by somebody. About all that work there now are wimmin' and girls and the first thing they knowed, it was afire all over. They think old George Stout and his bunch burned it."

Then Jes Faulkner came up and told of the burning of Harm Davis' gin on Splunge Creek in southwest Winston County the night before.

"Men, we've just got to do something! We've got to do something!" Ham Carpenter shouted. "We can't wait for that bunch to destroy all we have in this country. I say, let's not stand around here any longer and talk about it. Let's get busy and get that man and that bunch!"

"I'm ready!" Jim Beckner volunteered.

"So am I," Joe Roberts and the others joined.

The group rode away in the direction of Winston County.

* * *

Colonel Roddy had been operating in west Alabama and Mississippi. Wheeler had been in Tennessee. The second week in October, 1863, he had to retreat back across the Tennessee River because of superior forces. Roddy crossed the river at Rogersville, intending to meet

Wheeler at Athens, Alabama. He captured the Federal cantonment at Athens. In this raid they had captured Bill Looney and a fifteen year old boy, Henry Weaver, too.

"We've got the old man we've been wanting for a long time," announced Colonel Withers to General Wheeler and Roddy as the two sat in a small log store building discussing their triumph over the Federals.

"Who is he?" Wheeler asked.

"That little black Bill Looney," Withers informed him.

"Go and bring that devil over to the Athens Inn. That's where we are going to stay tonight," the General commanded the Colonel.

"That is really one man that I have been wanting to get a hold of throughout this war," Roddy told Wheeler later, as the two were on their way to the inn.

"What's his record?" Wheeler wanted to know.

"He is the devil that lived down in Winston County who has led so many of the Tories to the Yankee lines during the war. He is a dangerous man, too. I used to know him when I was sheriff of Lawrence County. He shot three or four men around his inn in Winston County. I'll bet he has led three hundred men to the Yankees during the war."

"Can't you catch him?" Wheeler wondered.

"Catch him — ha!" It was a forced laugh as he looked at Wheeler. "Why, I guess he has been caught a half dozen times. I have had him twice myself. Put him in an old stable with a guard stationed at the door and he got away. Caught him again at Decatur and we had started to hang him and the Federals came along and routed us and he got away again. So this is one time that I am determined that he will not get away. We are going to keep

him in the Inn with us tonight and if the Federals should attack us, he is one man that I want us to kill."

Before long, Wheeler and Roddy arrived at the Inn. There they ordered supper and awaited the arrival of Looney.

When Colonel Withers and a couple of other men finally arrived, delivering Looney, they had him tied with ropes and his hands tied securely behind him. The boy who had been captured with him was following along behind.

"That's no bad looking man to me," Wheeler muttered as they led him up.

"Not a bad man — but the dickens can steal your shirt off of you and get away with it if you don't watch him," Roddy warned.

Wheeler was looking at the prisoner critically. Bill, in turn, looked from one to the other of them, blinking his eyes with a great deal of apprehension.

"Here he is, men," Withers told them. "He shot a couple of men today when we captured him. He's a desperate character!"

Supper was served and General Wheeler and Roddy were called.

"Will we need to get a guard while we eat?" Wheeler asked Roddy.

"No — let's just tie him here with these ropes and leave him. You tie that rope over there to that door and I'll tie him here to this one and he can't get away. What are you a'doin' hanging around here, boy?" Roddy spoke in a scolding tone to the boy, Weaver by name.

"I was with that man, mister!" the boy spoke in a candid manner.

"Well, you don't want to stay on here with him, do you, now that he's a prisoner?" Wheeler asked him.

"I'd love to, sir," the boy answered promptly.

"Boy, you get out from here!" Roddy cried harshly, "we don't aim to have you hanging around any longer!"

The boy saw it was no use to try to remain, so reluctantly, he left the Inn and started walking down the road.

"What's a kid like that doing with the man anyway?" Wheeler wanted to know.

"There's no telling." Roddy shook his head. "May just be some boy who has gone with Bill to see his daddy behind the Yank lines. A lot of the folks do go with Looney to their people in Tennessee."

"That feller, Looney, does have a funny look about him, don't he?" Wheeler observed. "He has the funniest ears I ever saw."

"He looks like a fox and is fully as sneaking. Some of the men in my cavalry call him the 'Black Fox,' he is so sly!"

After the two had finished supper they returned to the room where they had left Looney tied.

"Don't you want anything to eat now, Looney?" Roddy asked, lighting his pipe.

"I'll just wait," Bill replied.

"He'll not have to wait long," Roddy whispered to Wheeler. "We've got orders to take care of that kind of prisoner."

"Couldn't we find out anything by questioning him?" Wheeler suggested.

"Nothing! That dad-blamed devil wouldn't tell us anything! The only thing we can do is to get rid of him! We'll do it in the morning, too."

"Well, it's already growing late and I'm tired. I think I'll get to bed," Wheeler allowed.

"Me, too. We spent the entire last night crossing the Tennessee River and getting away from Sherman and Dodge. I reckon it is a good thing, though, that we left the south side of the river or we would not have been sleeping inside tonight," agreed Roddy as he yawned in confirmation of his sleepiness.

"What are we going to do with this Tory we've got here, tonight?" Wheeler wanted to know.

"We are going to untie his hands and leave this rope around his neck and I am going out and order the pickets around this inn to fire on every man in sight coming from this house that don't have on an officer's uniform!"

The hands of Bill Looney were untied so that he could lie on his back on the floor. Then the ends of the rope which were around his neck were tied to the bedposts so that he would have to sleep between his captors — and then all laid down to go to sleep. Soon the two officers were both fast asleep and snoring loudly.

But Bill Looney remained wide awake.

"I've got to git out of this place fore these fellers wake up," Bill said to himself. "I shore am glad that they air both tired and that old Roddy didn't git to sleep none last night."

He began feeling of the knots in the rope around his neck. "Four knots in it," he counted, "but if I could pull one of the beds a little closer and git a little slack, I'd be all right." He gave a cautious yank and the bed on his right side slid over several inches. His heart started pounding heavily because the pull had caused Roddy to stop snoring. Bill immediately pretended he, like the other

had been, was snoring — so Roddy rolled over in his bed and started snoring again.

Reassured by the other's resumption of snoring, Bill started working with the knots again. Before long he had enough slack in the knots so that the last one had slipped a half inch. He hurriedly repeated the operation a half dozen times until he was able to pull his head free. He then eased about the room barefoot till he had found General Wheeler's clothes. He slowly, quietly, pulled them on and in the darkness felt about the fireplace for a bit of charcoal. Finally, he managed to find one and with the keys he found in the General's pocket, he unlocked the door. When he was on the outside of the room, he locked the door again and then put on his shoes.

Cautiously, he next slipped to the front door of the Inn to see if the key would unlock it, too. It did.

"Lord be praised!" he whispered to himself. He was so glad to learn that it would unlock that one, too, that he feared for a moment that he had spoken too loudly.

When the door opened, he stepped back with his fire coal to the door of the room where the officers slept, and with his charcoal wrote on the door. He stopped, thinking that he heard a noise inside the room. After a few seconds he marked again.

"Gosh!" he sighed as he finished, "I hope them pickets on the outside missed their sleep last night, too."

Finally, when he was on the outside, he pulled the coat about him in a way becoming the General and walked away.

Much to his surprise and relief, not a picket was to be seen anywhere.

"They must all be asleep," he said to himself as he slipped through a field. He was so happy, he was almost

running. He was laughing to himself, too. Not until he had gotten a couple of miles out of Athens and beyond where he would have expected the last picket outpost, did he realize how much too large the General's suit was. But then he felt the trousers flopping under his feet. He felt in his pocket for a knife, but found none. So he simply rolled them above his shoetops and hurried on in the direction of Decatur.

* * *

General Wheeler was the first to awaken the next day. It was late in the morning. The sun was streaming through the window.

"Where is your Tory, Roddy?" he called excitedly on seeing Bill gone.

Roddy turned and looked at the empty rope, then at Wheeler in wild-eyed fashion. "Well, I'll be —!" He jumped out of bed and to the door. It was still locked. "And where are your britches?" he asked on seeing the General's clothes gone.

"I am going to have every picket around this place shot this very day!" Wheeler cried angrily, flushing deeply.

"Listen, Wheeler," Roddy advised discreetly, laying his hand on Wheeler's shoulder, "the best thing we can do is to never mention this to anybody. Let's not blame the pickets. After all — we had the prisoner in our very own care and we are the most responsible."

When they, a few moments later, opened one of the windows and crawled out, they found written on the door in rough, uneven letters, "The Black Fox is Gone Again."

The two hung their heads in shame.

Chapter XVIII

REBEL REFUGEES

George Stout had a large number of men staying with him around Pikesville, the County Seat of Marion and Helvingston's Toll Gate. Daily, more were joining him in making raids on the home-guards. Several had even quit the Yankee armies to come home and join Stout in the raids and some had deserted from the Confederates and were lying out, waiting their chance to join Stout in his campaign against the home-guards.

The State Legislature, in November, 1863, had passed an act authorizing the organization of the State and County "Reserves." These were to include all men between the ages of seventeen and fifty. This made all the members of the Rebel party realize that things were indeed getting tough — that they were with their backs against a wall, so to speak and that the end might well be near.

One day Jim Downey and Judge Parker were on their way home from a meeting of the Confederate leaders in Jasper. The men were talking despondently.

"Well, it just looks like our country is doomed," sighed Downey. " We have done given all the men our section is able to spare and now, if we older men have to enter the 'Reserve', and if we should be called on to enter the service, I just don't know what our folks would do. And with old Stout and his bunch of bushwhackers raiding

somewhere every week, there is just no telling how our families will suffer."

"You know, I have thought," confided Parker, "that we may as well go to the service anyway. With Stout and his gang roaming the country, we'll be just as safe in the army as we are at home — maybe more so, for he's got it in for us. It has got to where I am actually afraid to stay at home and every time I go off, I am scared to death to go back home for fear I will find the house burned and the family murdered!"

The other nodded, his face clouded. "Yes," observed Downey, "it is getting now to where you can't tell when you meet a man, whether he is your friend or your enemy. That report that was given to us in Jasper of the number of men who have deserted from the cavalry and infantry is shocking. Why, a lot of them that have been in the Confederate forces are so mad at the Impressment officers and home-guards that they have threatened to come back and help kill the last one of us."

"I will tell you," Parker admitted, "that if it gets much worse, I am going to move my family somewhere and join the forces myself."

So they talked, continuing their discussion until they reached their home.

* * *

General Wheeler with Roddy and his cavalry were called by General Joseph E. Johnston in January, 1864, to Dalton, Georgia. This met with active protest by many of the people of north Alabama. The only defense the people of the hills felt that they now had against Stout and his continually growing band of "Bush-whackers," was the cavalry unit under Ham Carpenter, made up of

old men and the few spare horses and mules which were not in use in the winter time.

Ham Carpenter with his leaders, Jim Beckner, Jim Downey, Tobe Reed and Wiley Russel, had met at Carpenter's home in eastern Marion County.

"Where do you say we go, Ham?" Downey asked the leader, as they began planning their raids.

"I hear old Stout has gone back to Franklin County, maybe back to the Yankees. So they ain't no use to go there," Ham answered.

"I tell ye what we need to do around here — and that is to arrest and make some of these old men around here give us their money," Jim Beckner suggested to the group.

"That's right," agreed Wiley Russel. "There's a lotta folks around here that's got money and we need it. Besides, they had just as well help with this war as any uv us!"

"If we had the money that a lot uv these folks around here's got, it would shore help us in our need to buy salt and food fer our families," Reed added.

"I'll tell ye a Tory that's got some money that we oughter get," volunteered Jim Downey. "Old Pink Curtis has got some money. I'd say he's got both kinds — the Federal and also the Confederate money, too. We ought to go and take it, too, men. Cause old Pink has been opposed to the Confederacy all the time. And he is no better than anybody else and we ought to be using what money he's got instead of it alyin' up there in his house adoin' nobody any good!"

"Jim!" ordered Ham Carpenter, "You take a bunch uv these men and go over there and make old Tom Pink give ye his money. I'm gonna take the rest uv em and go

down to Rock City and get old man George Hallmark's money or kill him, one."

This decided upon, Jim Downey and five others headed for Winston County, where Tom Pink Curtis lived on Crooked Creek, not far from Houston. It was already well in the night when they reached his house. They entered the yard and hitched their horses, then, without any signal or invitation, they marched into his house.

"Howdy, Pink!" they greeted the old man boisterously as they shoved the door open.

"Howdy, men. Come in," he replied, looking up from some books he was working on. "It's quite a surprise to see you fellows out this time of night."

"Pink," Jim Downey spoke in a coarse, blunt manner, coming right to the point, "you've got a bunch uv money around here somewhere and we need it."

"Ah, men," Curtis laughed nervously, "that shorely can't be your business here tonight."

"That's our business as you are soon gonna find out," Downey assured him.

"Why, men, you know I don't have any money except a little that belongs to the people of the county. It isn't mine at all. You men don't want to take that." He raised his glasses on his forehead.

"Oh, no? We've come to take it and you had just as well git it for us," Downey assured him.

The group of ruffians were all in the house by now, most of them standing up close in front of the big fire. They were all watching him as Downey talked to him.

"Come on, Tom. Ye ain't nothin' but another one uv the Tories to us," Jake Snoddy told him.

"Why, men —" Curtis spoke solemnly, "you are not go-

ing to get the money that I have here because it is not mine and I am not going to let you have it."

"We are going to get it or we aim to kill you, one," Downey threatened.

"What is this, men?" Mrs. Curtis cried fearfully, as she came running to the door on hearing the fearful words, and looking in alarm at the men.

"Don't you come in here, old woman!" Downey cried roughly, meeting her at the door and shoving her back out. The others seized Tom Pink by the arms to hold him.

"Fork over that money or we'll kill you," one of the men threatened savagely.

"Oh, men, please don't come here like this!" Mrs. Curtis begged from the other room.

Curtis was brave and determined. "Well, you'd just as well kill me then, men," he told them, "because I'm not going to give you the money! It's not mine to give!"

Downey smiled fiendishly. "Here, heat this poker," he ordered, handing a big iron fire-poker to one of the men. "We'll brand him all over or get that money!"

One of the men took the poker and placed the end of it well into the bed of glowing coals. They were still holding Curtis by both arms.

"Here it is —" the man handed it to Downey, red-hot, after a bit.

Downey grabbed it and jabbed it into the side of old Curtis.

"Oh! My God!" Curtis screamed and jerked loose one hand and began to maul and kick at any he could reach. The iron rod had penetrated far into his flesh. His clothing was burning.

"Heat it again," Downey commanded. "Get that money, Pink, or tell us where we can get it!"

Curtis still refused to give in.

When the poker was red-hot again, another of the men grabbed it and jabbed it into Curtis' chest. It set his clothes ablaze as it burned into the hollow of his body.

Curtis screamed and kicked until he had kicked two of the men down onto the floor. He jerked loose again with one arm and began swinging until he had knocked another of the men to the floor. In his desperation his strength was great, but he was hopelessly outnumbered. Just then another of the ruffians ran up and stabbed him between the shoulders with the burning iron rod. The blow paralyzed him and he fell moaning to the floor.

"Oh, mercy, men! Wait and I'll tell Marthy to get the money, if you will let me alone!" he screamed as he lay on the floor.

"Here it is, men — here it is!" His wife now ran into the room with the bag of money. "Won't you go now and leave us alone?"

The men turned and started to leave, but then two or three of them began to realize that Curtis had hurt them in the brawl.

"Say, I ain't agonna leave that d—— Tory as long as there is a breath in him," growled one of the men. "He broke my nose all to pieces!"

"He hurt me, too! Let's go back and kill the devil!" another agreed.

The men ran back into the house and dragged him from under his wife, who had thrown herself over him to try to protect him. They dragged him out to the yard fence and threw him across one of the horses and rode away.

They took him on to the creek bank, where they hung him and shot him to death.

The next morning when his wife and her neighbors found him, he was lying on the bank of the creek with his feet frozen fast in the ice. They had to get an ax to break the ice in order to get him out.

* * *

Carpenter and his group had gone on to the home of George Hallmark and demanded his money. When he refused to get it for them, they shot him down in the door of his house.

His grown daughter, Armenia, saw him and came running and fell across his body, and the men brutally shot her, too. As she reached up to catch and hold to the door, the blood on her hand painted the form of her hand on the door.

* * *

In the spring of 1864, the whole country of the hill section seemed doomed to suffer at the raids of the Tory bands.

The Tories had decided that the only way to do was to fight fire with fire — do the same things to the Rebel home-guards that those men had been doing to them. It was not in their makeup to want to torture any man, but having seen and heard of all the atrocities perpetrated on their loved ones, their hearts hardened and they did awful things to members of the home-guards and cavalry when they caught any of them.

* * *

Sam Noles went to see Judge Parker again one day about the welfare of their section.

"Judge, it just looks like we are ruined if we can't get

some help from somewhere," he complained. "For that Tory leader, George Stout, is back in Marion County again and has a full supply of arms and ammunitions and a big bunch of men are going to him and they say every man is asked to bring a list of the ones he wants to hunt down and punish — meanin' — kill — torture and kill!"

Judge Parker stroked his chin thoughtfully. "Sam," he replied, "I have just returned from the Tennessee Valley, where we have had a meeting and there are letters that are already on their way to the Secretary of War and to General Joseph E. Johnston asking that men be sent to north Alabama to guard against the deserters and bush-whackers of this section. I will admit that if we can't get some protection for our homes and ourselves, that I am ready to move away from here in the next few days."

"But, Judge, we can't do that because we are in the Reserves now and they won't let us go away without their consent," Noles complained.

"Well, I can go to the regular forces and let my wife and daughter move South to Tuscaloosa or Montgomery."

While the two were talking, along came Lee Hicks, an old man from South Winston, and broke into their conversation.

"Say, men, we have had another bad killing in Winston," he cried excitedly.

"Lordy, Lee! Hurry an' tell us who it was!" Judge Parker urged.

"It was Jim Downey. Them Tory bush-whackers went to his house last night and shot him as he tried to run from the door and after they had killed him, they burnt his house and throwed Jim in the house and burnt him up along with it!"

"Good God!" Noles heaved a long sigh. "Judge, that is getting mighty close to home!"

"Another group of them were over at Harm Davis's place! They burnt his cotton gin and caught Harm and burnt his feet in the fireplace trying to make him tell where his money was!"

"You don't mean that happened right here close to home, do you?" Parker gasped. "Fellows, we have just got to do something about it. A few more days and it is going to be too late for all of us."

"There is certainly not enough men left in the whole settlement to guard one house, much less all the whole thing," Noles lamented.

"The people of north Alabama have written to the leaders of the Confederacy for help and protection against such crimes, but it will be too late if they get any at all the way them murderers and robbers are going about killing the people and running them away from this section," Parker recounted sadly. "Excuse me, men. I want to go and tell my folks of this."

He left the two talking and went to his house.

A few minutes later and Judge Parker had gathered his wife and daughter with him in the great living-room of their house, and began to tell them the latest distressing news and his decision that they had best leave home for their own safety.

"I have put it off for a long time, my dears," he said, "thinking that maybe the war would take a turn for the better and it wouldn't be necessary, but it looks like it is growing worse all the time. The most distressing news I have now is — not just trouble from the armies, but news

from right here in our own county — in our own settlement. We are no longer safe here!"

Both Cherry and her mother looked at him aghast. They hated the thought of having to leave the home they loved and had lived in so long.

"But surely, me and Mama could stay on here — the men don't have anything against us, do they?" Cherry pleaded.

Her father seemed doubtful. "You could, I guess, but for one thing," he tried to explain. "Just that you are without food and clothing here. I would have to leave — those men with Old Stout have a list of names and I am sure to be on their list. I'll have to leave — and I want you both to go south to Tuscaloosa or Montgomery, where there is more food and better opportunities for you. And you won't be in any danger of these murdering rogues there."

Mother and daughter looked at one another.

"Will you promise to go south and stay till the war is over?" persisted Judge Parker. "I will have to be leaving, even before you do.

"You mean, Zeb will drive us, then, in the carriage?" Cherry inquired.

"No, Cherry, I am going to take Zeb with me."

"Where are you going, Pappa?" Mrs. Parker asked.

"I am already in the Reserves — so I think that if I have to go, I will just go to the service and I might as well take Zeb and the last of the horses and the carriage with me," he explained.

"How will we go, Pappa?" Cherry asked.

"You can go on the Stage Coach, my dears. I will send someone to stay with you and to take you to Montgomery."

"Oh, we hate so much to see you go away, Pappa," Cherry wailed, hugging her father. "When are you going?"

"I am going today to Walker County and see if I can't get someone to come and stay with you till you can get away," he told them.

"What can we do with the Negro wimmin that are still here?" Mrs. Parker asked.

"And with Sincy?" Cherry added perplexedly.

"We will just have to leave them here and tell them to try to stay around till the war is over or go and live with anybody that will have them. You won't be able to take any of them with you, I am afraid."

"But I will sure want to take Sincy with me," Cherry persisted.

"If they will let you take her on the stage coach, you may, but if they won't, you will just have to leave her here," Parker told her.

An expression of disappointment swept over Cherry's face at the thought of having to leave Sincy when they went away.

"You may pack my blankets and my clothing, dear, while I see about greasing the carriage and get Zeb to hitch the horses," Parker told his wife as he left the room in tears.

"Mama, can't we find some way to take Sincy with us when we go?" Cherry asked her mother after her father was out of the house.

"We would like to take all of them, honey, if we could. But we won't be able to take any of them, I am afraid," her mother told her sadly.

* * *

As Zeb drove to the front gate, Mr. Parker went through the house from the back. When he had all his blankets and bags packed in the carriage, he drew Cherry into his arms and held her for several minutes, kissing her tenderly.

"Goodbye, Darling," he whispered. "I have tried my best to be good to you, Sweetheart. I have tried all the time to protect you. And all the time you have been my chief concern." He had to dry his eyes. "Pappa loves you, Cherry — he wants you to be happy."

Then he turned to his wife and held her for a long time. Tears were flowing freely from the eyes of both.

"Goodbye, Love, I may never see you again," he sobbed. "Remember that I have gone to fight for you and what I thought was right. And even though our cause already seems lost, I am still willing to give myself for it. Be sure and take good care of Cherry and God bless you both, and keep you!"

They were all crying as he turned and walked to the carriage.

They watched him until he was in the carriage, then turned as they waved goodbye and went back into the house.

* * *

It was in the early hours of the following morning when Parker arrived at the home of R. W. Walker, who lived only a few miles northeast of Jasper.

"Hello, Mr. Walker!" Parker called. None of the family were yet up.

"Well, well, if it isn't Judge Parker! Come in, Judge," Walker invited, on being roused. "I must say that I am thoroughly surprised, even though I am happy to see you coming in at this hour of dawn."

"Came just as soon as I could. Maybe I am fortunate that I was able to get away from Winston County during the night," returned Parker.

"Will you have your team-man turn the horses in the stable and feed them a bite?" Walker was thoughtful about the team.

"I guess they had as leave stand there for a while. Besides, I believe Zeb is too sleepy after the night's ride to be concerned about them now," Parker explained. "Please don't awaken other members of your family, anyway, just now. I have some matters of grave concern to discuss with you and maybe we won't have to seek any other opportunities of being alone."

"Come on in then, and I will kindle the fire." Walker began raking the coals out of the ashes and adding bits of rich pine to start the fire. "What on earth has become so urgent as to bring you here during the night, Judge?"

"It's the conditions of the home section. They are distressing," Parker began. "I guess you have already heard about the bush-whackers in Marion and Fayette and Winston, have you not?"

"Of course, I have heard of their killing Mell Thomas, Jim Mooney and Al Gibson. Have there been any other killings lately?" Walker added.

"Why, just night before last, they killed Jim Downey and burned him up in his own house! They also burned Harm Davis's feet off, trying to make him tell where his money was hid. And by now, they've killed others, no telling who."

"Why can't the folks there get Roddy, Patterson, Mead, or May back there to defend themselves or hunt the leaders of the that mob down and kill them?"

"I was at a meeting a few days ago in the Tennessee Valley where the leaders there wrote to General Joseph E. Johnston and the Secretary of War both, asking them to send Roddy or somebody there to defend them against the Tory raids. What I am afraid of, though, is that we will not be able to get any recognition in the hills and them marauders will be loose there the rest of the war. I hate to tell you, but I am on my way to join Johnston at Dalton, Georgia, or some other unit of the army. I am sending my family to Montgomery, so I won't be afraid of their getting killed."

"Who is the leader of the Tories now?" Walker asked. "Has that man, Stout, come back?"

"Yes, he is back with a full supply of guns and ammunition and I am told, has invited every man in the country that has a grievance against any home-guard or Induction Officer or Impressment Officer, to come to him with a list of names of them they want killed. It is terrible. A number of the men are already leaving with their families to keep from being killed. There are not enough men left in Winston County to defend one house, much less the homes of all of them."

"I'll tell you — I have an idea!" Walker smiled as he spoke. "I know a way we can get rid of that leader, Stout."

"Tell it — I am anxious to hear it," Parker returned.

"I am going down in the central part of Alabama in a few days and I will get some of the officers there to send a man up in Marion County where Stout stays, and let him get in with Stout till he can get the drop on him and kill the mean old devil!" He slapped Parker on the shoulder in high good humor at his clever idea.

Parker nodded, smiling broadly. "A wonderful idea, Ruel," he approved. "A wonderful idea, if you can find the man that will do that! You had sure better not tell the man, though, about how mean old Stout is, or you can't get a man in Alabama that will go."

Some of Walker's family were getting up by this time and interrupted their conversation there.

"I'll tell you what I came to ask you to do for me," Parker spoke in a low, confidential tone. "I want you to go to Tuscaloosa, if you will, and tell Colonel Garland, the President of the University and the Cadet Corps there, to send Mark McDowell back to my home in Winston County to take my wife and daughter to Montgomery. You understand and may explain to Colonel Garland my personal wish in the matter. You remember the McDowells who came to my place and stayed for a time after the Yanks captured Huntsville and Decatur in '62?"

"Yes, yes! I do recall. A very fine young man, I recall the McDowell chap to be. It seems to me that your daughter, Cherry, should derive a great deal of consideration from the boy, too. Sure, I will be only too glad to tell Langdon C. Garland of this. Mr. Garland has always been a personal friend of mine and when I tell him of your going into the service yourself, I feel that he will be only too glad to comply with your wish. You don't deem it necessary for me to speak to the boy about it, do you?"

"Well, I hardly think it necessary. He will remember where we live when Garland gives him the instruction as to where he is to go. And after he arrives at my house, my wife can give him the other instructions."

Mr. Parker and Walker continued their visit and business conversation until breakfast was served. They then

went into the big dining room of the Walker home to join the other members of the Walker family in the morning meal.

* * *

Stout and his men wanted, above all else, to capture Stoke Roberts and mete out to him the punishment that he so richly deserved. But try as they would, for some time at least, he was always too clever and too fast for them and always managed to elude them, although they did come rather close to catching him a number of times.

Chapter XIX

A TRAITOR'S DOOM

Because George Stout had organized such an efficient band and was doing so much harm, the activities drew attention from the headquarters of the Confederates. Early in the spring of 1864, they began sending men and arms into the section in which Stout and his men operated to capture or kill these raiding Tories. In March, Colonel Maxwell, with two hundred and fifty men were sent to operate against the Tories in Fayette, Walker and Winston Counties.

Colonel D. W. Jones was sent against the reported Union Forces in Marion County. But George Stout and his men heard of these organized forces against them in time and cleverly slipped out for the Yankee lines in the Tennessee Valley.

* * *

It was a blustery March day. The threatening dark clouds looked as though they would begin to pour out a flood any minute.

Cherry Parker and her mama were sitting alone in the bedroom of their home — for they still had not been able to bring themselves to leave it. The Negroes still left to them, they knew, were all scared and hiding out in the big storm cellar.

"Mama, I know you must be very lonesome," Cherry said, noticing that her mother had been weeping, and went over to her and put her arm about her.

"Oh, honey — things do seem so dreadful!" sighed her mother and wiped her tears with her clean white apron. "Maybe it's the mean weather that causes me to feel so lonely."

"Mama, you are such a dear!" Cherry kissed the older woman on the cheek. "If I could be only half as strong and brave as you are — it must be so considerate to be as you are — but, Mama, I have never been able to find such reasons for my sadness."

"But, child, when we can blame our feelings on the weather, we can have a hope that the skies will be blue and bright again when the rains are over," said her mother, trying to smile bravely.

Cherry reached into her pocket for her handkerchief to wipe a tear from her eye. "Mama, I know how hard you have tried to be cheerful. I know how you have tried to drown your sorrows and conceal your tears from me. Ycu are worried sick about Pappa."

"Oh, how I wonder where he is?" Mrs. Parker broke out into weeping again.

Cherry patted her mother on the shoulder lovingly. She was trying her best to help her mother through the darkness of the war. Mr. Parker had been gone for over three weeks and they had received no word at all from him.

"Cherry, your Pappa was so tired when he left. He had worked so hard during the war and when Dr. Kaiser was killed, it almost broke him down. He was so scared. Then, a while back when Mr. Downey was killed and burned, it almost ran him distracted. I do wish that we could get some word from him to know if he has reached the group he wanted to join."

The clouds seemed to grow darker than they had been all day. It was soon so dark they needed a light. And then they were startled by a heavy step on the porch. A moment later a tap sounded on the door. Cherry rose to see who it might be.

"Wait, Cherry," her mother cautioned her. "I will see who it is — no telling, it might be old George Stout."

Cherry remained in her chair, beginning to shake with fright at the dreaded name. She listened closely to catch the voice as it spoke to her mother, and heard —

"Howdy, Mrs. Parker — I'm —"

And just then a door blew shut, drowning out the name.

"Well, we are so glad to see you. Come on in," her mother's voice sounded inviting the visitor a moment later.

"Oh, is that my Pappa?" Cherry leaped from her chair and started toward the door, then stopped in surprise. There, in the hall stood Mark McDowell holding his heavy bag. A spirit of surprise seized Cherry and she stood speechless for several seconds.

"Hello, Cherry," said Mark with a broad smile.

"Why, hello, Mark — McDowell!" Cherry grabbed his hand in a firm greeting. "Gee, Mark," she cried enthusiastically, "it is so good to see you — to see anybody that looks like a friend." She stepped back to look him over. It was almost too dark for her to tell the color of his uniform. "My goodness, Mark, you look so nice and your suit is so becoming. Come in, Mark." Cherry led the way into the parlor.

"Excuse me, if you will, please, but I am so very tired," he said, seating himself in a rocking chair. "I have walked from the stage line on the Byler Road and carried the heavy bag. And I have walked so fast. I thought

every moment that it was going to rain. My feet are blistered."

"You are on your way to see the home folks, I guess," Mrs. Parker surmised.

"Well, hardly — that is, without I could have your own permission," he replied. "And then it might be risky on account of the Yankees around Decatur."

"Our permission?" Cherry was surprised almost beyond word, "Why, Mark — I can't realize why you should say that? You must be presuming — and you are not going to your home?"

"Well — I — I was at least presuming that you both knew that I was coming," he said with a smile, looking a bit perplexedly at first one, then the other. And Cherry and her mother were also looking at each other.

"And why should you think we would know?" Cherry queried.

"Well, I, at least, suspected that it was you who gave me the invitation," he declared seemingly bewildered.

Cherry and her mother looked at each other again.

"Where is Judge Parker? I should have expected that I would be able to see him when I arrived," the young man went on.

"Why, Mark, Pappa has been gone for almost a month," explained Cherry. "And you didn't know that?"

"Hadn't heard a word about it. All I know is that Colonel Garland called me into his office and asked me if I knew where you lived and when I told him I did, he told me that I had an invitation to come and stay with you. That I would receive my instructions when I arrived."

"Oh, Cherry, I know now," Mrs. Parker cut in with a bright, happy smile, "don't you remember your Pappa

said that he would have someone sent to stay with us and to take us to Montgomery?"

"Mark! And you're the one! Oh, it is very kind of you!" Cherry was very jubilant about it. Mark, however, still showed signs of bewilderment.

"I am sure I don't understand," he said.

"Well, you see, Mark," Mrs. Parker tried to explain, "Mr. Parker went into the service, or he left here to go — we have not heard from him, and told us that he would send someone back to stay with us and take us to Montgomery."

"And why do you plan to go to Montgomery?" Mark wanted to know.

"Oh, goodness, Mark — haven't you heard?" Cherry was astonished that he had not learned. "There is a big bunch of Tories that are going around here killing every Confederate sympathizer in the country. That is the reason Pappa went to the army and he was afraid for us to stay here after he was gone, and he wants us to go South, where we will be out of danger."

"I see," admitted Mark as a look of uneasiness came into his face. "When do you plan to go?"

"As soon as we can," replied Mrs. Parker. "It seems that everything is quiet around here now with Colonel Maxwell and Colonel Jones in this section with their men. Old Stout and his group have gone. But Maxwell and Jones will not be kept here long. When they fail to find any of the Tories and bush-whackers, they will leave and old Stout and others are sure to be coming back and killing people like they were two or three weeks ago."

"Where have you been stationed, Mark?" Cherry changed the conversation. "Adelle wrote me that you were a Cadet but she didn't tell me where you were."

"I have been stationed at the University at Tuscaloosa, ever since I entered the service two years ago," Mark informed her.

"We were awfully excited when we heard that the Federals at Huntsville had arrested a McDowell as hostage for Chris Sheets. We knew it must be your father," Mrs. Parker told Mark.

"Yes, I was very sad about it, too, when I heard it," Mark replied. "We can't be sure, though, but a worse fate might have befallen him before now if he were not in the prison. I haven't heard from home in so long and the Yanks have captured that section of the country so many times till all of the people who were there may be gone by now," he said sadly.

"Well, I must go and call the cook to fix supper now," Mrs. Parker said, walking toward the door. "I will leave you two to entertain yourselves for a while."

"Mark, you look so different in your uniform," Cherry said, trying to adjust a lighted candle in a holder. "I am sure I wouldn't have recognized you had I met you in a strange place."

"Thanks a lot, Cherry," he told her grinning. "I do feel that I have really grown up a lot since I last saw you." Mark was shifting his foot across his leg. "But what I am disturbed about now is that man — who did you say he was, that is going around here killing so many?" Mark showed real concern about the matter.

"Oh, he is Old Stout. I don't know what his name is except that everyone calls him 'Old Stout.' I feel sure we will not be bothered because everyone knows that Pappa is gone and they wouldn't want to harm innocent women." Cherry was still working with the candle holder. "Be-

sides, nobody knows that you are here and if anyone comes along, you must hide."

"Such stories, though, do make a fellow feel so insecure in these parts." Mark could not forget the horribleness of the stories he had heard about the man, Stout.

"If you would like to rest a bit and bathe your hands and face before supper, I'll be glad to show you to your room," Cherry offered.

"I surely would like a place where I could rest my weary feet from these heavy shoes," he said, smiling ruefully and pointing to the heavy hob-nailed shoes he was wearing.

Cherry took the candle and led the way up the stairway and to the guest bedroom. The rain had begun a short time before and was pouring down now in heavy sheets.

"Here is your room, Mark." Cherry pointed out to him the room and placed the candle on the washstand in a corner. "I hope you will like it — you had better come down pretty soon because we are going to have supper in a little while."

She left him, ran back down the stairs and to the kitchen. There stood Sincy at the bottom of the stairs.

"Law, Miss Cherry, yo sho is powful most joyd bout somethin'!" she cried. Then she whispered, "Miss Cherry, is dat Mistah Bill come back?"

"No — Sincy. It isn't Bill — it's Mark — Mark McDowell. He has come to stay with us. You will like Mark a lot, too, Sincy," Cherry replied, feeling a twinge at the thought of how much happier she would feel if Bill could be with her. But Bill was somewhere else — safe, she hoped.

"Miss Cherry — I specks yo is gwina lak dat man a lot, ain't you, chile?" Sincy teased. "De way I don heah yo talkin' to dat man, he don foun a fancy in you!"

"Aw, don't be silly, Sincy — you remember who Mark is — the one that came for us in Huntsville when we had to leave on account of the Yanks. And the one who stayed with us when his Pa and Ma and Adelle stayed at our house the first of the war."

"Oh, sho, Miss Cherry — I sho do member dat boy! Is dat who de man is whut yo wuz doin dat talkin to up da?" Sincy followed her on into the kitchen where Mrs. Parker was busy helping the cooks with supper.

Mark was still walking around the room uneasily, after Cherry left him. He had not after all, stopped either to take off his shoes and rest his feet or to bathe his hands and face. He went to every window in turn and threw the shutters open to observe the height from the ground and to contemplate the prospects of a leap, in case the man, Stout, and his bunch should chance to call. It was already too dark and raining too much for him to be able to see outside.

"That man Stout, killing people around here — all the Southern sympathizers!" Mark said to himself audibly. "And I am to stay here for a few days till the family is ready to go to Montgomery. And I am invited — I am to get my instructions — from them —! Whew! This is dreadful! Why didn't someone tell me that I was coming on such an errand? I would have begged for front line duty!"

There was not much to serve for the evening meal, for the war had taken most of what they had — but they served what they had — and finally Cherry and her

mother viewed the set table with eyes that halfway, at least, approved.

"It's the best we have at any rate," Mrs. Parker said, "now, Cherry, you may call Mark."

Cherry went to the stairway and called for Mark, but he did not answer. Finally she went up to his room — the door was open, and she found him slumped across the bed fast asleep. She told her mother about this, and they decided that it would be kindest to just let the youth finish his sleep as that would do him a world of good.

He slept straight through the night, but appeared in time for breakfast the next morning. It was a sunny day, but the March wind still had a tinge of chill about it. Spring birds were chirruping merry tunes all about the woodland.

Mark was limping somewhat on account of blisters on his right foot.

"Good morning, Mark — we are waiting breakfast for you," Cherry said with a smile.

"I'm sorry I slept straight through the night," he said, "but I was tireder than I thought, I guess. I didn't mean to be impolite."

"Think nothing of it, Mark," Mrs. Parker assured him. "We're glad you were able to get a good long rest."

"I hope we can be leaving on your trip to Montgomery just as soon as possible," Mark said over the breakfast table. "I'm worried since you told me about the depredations of old Stout."

"I'm afraid we can't go before next week, now," Mrs. Parker explained sadly. "We only have stage service now, once a week and it will be four more days before there will be a stage going back south."

"I wish we could go today," Mark said frankly.

The meal over Cherry and her mother excused themselves, explaining that they had to see Mrs. Kaiser and others of their neighbors and make their farewells — but that Mark should enjoy himself as best he could at the place in their absence; they would be back later that day, very likely by noon.

Left alone, Mark went back upstairs to see about his clothing. He could not help think about Old Stout, and worried a good bit. Late in the morning he was compelled to take off his shoes to give his feet some needed rest. He sat in a rocking chair with his feet on top of a quilt-press. As the morning drew on, he leaned back in the rocker and went to sleep. Several hours must have passed when he awakened at a strange sound and leaped in a panic of fright from his chair.

"I must have been dreaming of Stout," he told himself. "I am sure though, I never heard horses running plainer in my life." He grabbed his shoes to try to force his swollen feet back into them. His heart was pounding madly in his breast. "I do hear horses — real horses! It was no dream!" he cried and ran to the window and pushed open the shutter a few inches.

Coming toward the house he saw dozens of horses. Terrified, he ran to the window in the back of the room, shoved the shutters open and leaped out. It was a long jump. His tired, swollen feet seemed as if they had broken to pieces as he hit the ground hard. He lay for several seconds before he could rise and run. Then he leaped up and made for the woods across the patch.

Back of him he heard angry shouts. "Yonder is a man, men! Yonder is a Tory!" he heard one of the riders shouting. And then he heard the whole pack of horses

racing around the yard fence. He tried to run faster but fear completely paralyzed him. On came the loping horses, bearing down upon him.

"Stop! Stop or we'll kill you!" the men swore.

He leaned against a rail, unable to climb over it. A moment later the men leaped off their horses and surrounded him.

"Yeah! He's a Tory — sneaking around in a Confederate uniform," one of the men growled.

"I'm not a Tory!" Mark tried to convince them. He saw that his captors were all dressed in gray uniforms and he saw no man in the crowd who would fit the description of Old Stout.

"Don't give us no lie, you Tory!" a gruff voice blasted out. "Get that rope, men, we'll take this man on with us. We'll teach him how to lie around here in a stolen uniform!"

"But, men, please," he begged, "I'm not a Tory. I am a true Confederate."

"Yea, you are a Confederate! You are a deserter! You'll pay for this just as if you were a Tory," the men promised him, looping a rope about his neck.

"Oh, please let me explain, men!" he begged in tears and shaking with terror.

"We've heard that kind of story before," they told him disdainfully. "We don't need any more lies from such as you!"

Cherry and her mother returned to the house just as the men began dragging Mark along after them with a rope about his neck. They took in the situation at a glance. Cherry paled, but her mother marched up and confronted the men boldly. "Say, men, who is in command of this detachment?" she asked sternly.

"I am, Colonel Maxwell at your service," replied the leader. "What is your complaint? I was sent here by General Joseph E. Johnston to catch the Tories and deserters of this section. And we have just —"

"You only think you have," Mrs. Parker snapped angrily. "That young man you have prisoner there is neither a Tory nor a deserter. Colonel Maxwell, this is Marcus McDowell, the son of Colonel McDowell of Decatur — one of the most loyal Confederates in Alabama." Mrs. Parker introduced Mark to Maxwell. "I think, after this, you had better be a bit more careful before you let your enthusiasm run away with your better judgment."

Maxwell flushed and barked an order to untie the rope from about Mark's neck.

"Sorry, ma'm," he said, "but if he was okay, why in the tar-thunder did the young dickens run around here like a scared Tory when we came riding up?"

"He was running because he was a scared Rebel, I guess," one of the men interposed, and the entire group got a hearty laugh from the bit of wit.

Mrs. Parker explained further, "Colonel Maxwell, he was sent here by Colonel Garland at the University, at the request of my husband, to take me and my daughter to Montgomery in a few days."

"Oh, I see," Maxwell nodded. then he turned to Mark again and advised him sternly, "Young man — from now on, you had better be prepared to tell people who you are when they come along, instead of trying to out-run every horse that comes along."

Mark tried to force a smile, but he was still too badly scared to speak.

The men continued on their way and Mark went with Cherry and Mrs. Parker on into the house.

* * *

Three days later, Sam Noles came with his carriage to take Mrs. Parker, Cherry and Mark to the stage line on Byler Road.

"Oh, Mrs. Parker," he called, panic evident in his voice. "There has been another dreadful murder! Maxwell and Jones were sent here to hunt them Tory raiders, and not a one of them was heard of as long as they were here. Then, when these men were both called back to Dawson, Georgia, night before last, last night Old Stout and his men got busy again and pulled another cruel raid — the worst of the war. They raided the Hartsook home-guard station and shot up or injured in other ways a lot of the men. They also caught Stoke Roberts and there is no telling what they did to him. He's still not found and there's not anybody in the country to go and look for him."

Mrs. Parker looked worried. She turned to Mark and to Cherry as if seeking advice. Then she said, "Well, I don't know what to do. I am even afraid to ride the stage coach through Fayette County — if them men should still be in that section."

Mark was pale and nervous, but he said quickly, "My goodness, Mrs. Parker, let's go today anyway. Some place — I had as leave go to the Yankee Army as to stay in these parts with that terrible raider!" He made no attempt to conceal his fears of Stout.

He looked at Cherry. "Did you hear, Cherry?" he asked. "Old Stout is raiding again! He killed Stoke Roberts last night — he's brutal, dangerous! Let's leave here — go some place! We can't stay here!"

"Well, I hate to say it — but what he got is good enough for old Stoke Roberts — he was a fiend," Cherry said.

"Cherry," interrupted her mother, shocked, "how can you say such a thing?"

"Easy enough —" retorted Cherry, "they couldn't kill that old dickens in too bad a way to pay him back for all the horrible things he and his men have done to others. The country will really be better off without him."

"Well," cut in Noles, "if you folks are ready, or can get ready in a hurry, we'd better go. I want to get away from these here parts myself."

"Suits me," Mark cried earnestly. "How can we go? Isn't there some other way besides going near where they raided last night?"

"If we go at all, we will go some other way besides back toward that Byler Road," Noles told him. "I had rather go the Cheathem Road to Jasper. You can get a stage coach there. Maybe the Tories won't be there until you can get away."

"Well, we have been waiting and planning to go for some time, so let's get ready and get away as quick as we can," Mrs. Parker told them.

She hurried to the kitchen to talk to Mandy and to send for the other Negro women who had been left on the plantation. She wanted to give them some instructions before she left.

Then Sincy came running into the house and right before Mark and Mr. Noles, she grabbed Cherry into her arms and began to scream, "Please, Miss Cherry, ain't yo gwine atake me wid yo? Please do, Miss Cherry. Please

don leab me hea wid dese hea Niggers!" She was crying hysterically.

"Sincy," Cherry said sadly, choking back her own cries now, "I wish we did have room for you. You could sure go if we had."

"Law, Miss Cherry, I wants to go wid my honey chile so bad. Can't I go wid you?" She was crying worse now.

"Come with me to my room, Sincy!" Cherry told her and once they were in her room, Cherry turned to the colored girl. "I wish more than anything we didn't have to go, Sincy," she sighed. "And, next, I wish that I could take you with me. But since I can't, I want you to take good care of my things — and I'll be back some time to stay with you always."

"Oh, Law, Miss Cherry — Law, Miss Cherry! I sho can't stand to hea yo words. I is so sad, so low bout dis! I sho can't stand it, honey chile." She was jumping up and down on the floor now as if she were being whipped.

Cherry was crying too.

"Listen, Sincy," she pleaded, trying to explain and make it easier for the girl who had always been so faithful to her, "it grieves me so much to have to leave you and my home and the pretty things I have here. You must stay here and keep them for me and maybe the Lord will be good to me and I can came back to you and find the things I have left." Cherry began hurrying about, gathering up her clothes which she would have to take with her.

After a short time spent in packing their trunks and small chests, they were ready to load them onto Mr. Sam Noles' carriage and start their trip toward Jasper and

Montgomery where they would join the other refugees from the hills.

* * *

Stoke Roberts was found in southwest Winston County in the Wolf Pit only a few miles from the place where Henry Tucker had been killed. Stout and his men had taken him from the Hartsook Prison in Fayette County to this place. They had taken a long, iron spike and had driven it completely through his mouth and out the back of his head and had nailed him to the root of a huge oak tree.

His body was already decomposed so badly that Alf Tittle and Andy Ingle could hardly stand to chop the root loose from the tree to where they could turn him over in a shallow grave and cover him.

* * *

The Rebels tried various ruses to catch Old Stout. They felt for a time that they had hit on one which would work — they sent a man by the name of Drury McMinn to join up with Stout, pretending to be in complete sympathy with him, but to watch his chance and kill Stout.

But even this clever plan was doomed to failure, for Old Stout seemed to have a positive genius for smelling out traitors — and laid a counter-trap for McMinn — baiting him. He lay one night, pretending sleep with McMinn, the new man sleeping in the bed next to him — with no one else about. It seemed to McMinn that no better opportunity would ever come along to accomplish his mission, so he rose quietly from his bed and slipped to the side of Stout's bed and leaned over him with sharp knife poised. Then, as he was about to bring it down hard into the supposed sleeping man's heart, Stout's hand

shot up and seized McMinn's wrist in a steely grip, tightened, twisted — there was a sickening crack, and the knife dropped from McMinn's nerveless fingers.

McMinn was dished out a choice death and buried within a few hours. Any other man who might have considered trying to "get" Old Stout would be sure to think better of it after hearing that story.

Chapter XX

IN MONTGOMERY

The stage-coach journey had ended for Mrs. Parker, Cherry and Mark at the home of Mrs. Albert Lynn, and they were glad to see this old acquaintance of Mrs. Parker, who lived in the heart of the city of Montgomery.

"Oh, I am so glad to see you, Mrs. Parker. Come right in, all of you —" Mrs. Lynn invited them cordially.

"Thank you so much, Mrs. Lynn," Mrs. Parker said. "I do hope we aren't intruding in coming to your home, but it was our only hope, it seems, for the present." She turned to Cherry, "This is my daughter, Cherry, Mrs. Lynn," she introduced her daughter, then turned to Mark, "and this," she continued, "is Mark McDowell, a young man of our dearest friends. Mark has come to make the trip with us here and to stay with us during the war."

"Howdy, Mrs. Lynn," Cherry said, much impressed with the gorgeous beauty of the Lynn home.

"Howdy, Mrs. Lynn," Mark said, bowing politely.

"I am so delighted to meet you, every one, and to have you all in my home," said Mrs. Lynn. "You are just as welcome as can be. First of all, it is nothing but right that we here in these parts, should share our homes and our comforts with you people of other sections of the state who have had to flee your homes on account of the war. You folks will excuse me a moment, please — I want to go and call my daughter, Margarette. I want her to meet

you all and she will be delighted to have you with us, I am sure."

With this, Mrs. Lynn left the room, and Cherry and Mark took advantage of her absence to inspect the luxuries of the room.

"My goodness, Mama, I am afraid that I am not going to feel at ease here in this wonderful magnificent home," Cherry whispered. "Just look there!" She pointed to a huge, richly ornamented mirror above the mantle. "And just look at the thick, beautiful rugs — and such fine furniture!"

"I must confess that I have never seen anything quite like it," Mark agreed. "I thought that I had seen some fine homes and beautiful furnishings in north Alabama, but I realize now that I had never seen anything like this before."

Just then their hostess returned, accompanied by her daughter, whom she introduced to all.

"I am delighted to meet you all, I am sure," Margarette bowed to each in turn, as her mother gestured with her hands, both of which were bedecked with diamond rings and gold bracelets.

"And we are happy to meet you, Margarette," Mark and Cherry returned cordially.

They were all made to feel perfectly at home. It was decided Cherry would share Margarette's room with her, and Mrs. Parker with the hostess. Mark was assigned to the guest chamber upstairs.

"It's too bad our son, Buddy, is not here now to be your companion," said Mrs. Lynn. "He's away at sea with Admiral Semmes on the Alabama, now."

As the ladies left the spacious reception hall with their guests, Mark took a walk outside the front door onto the

beautiful tiled porch. For several seconds he stood there surveying the stately white columns which supported the roof.

"By golly," he mused to himself, "this is the grandest place that I ever have seen — and Margarette is the most beautiful!"

It was a bright, sunshiny day, which seemed to add luster to the whole scene. The daffodils along the walk were bursting with beauty. The azaleas seemed to compete with everything in the realm for supremacy.

"Well," thought Mark, "I can see why these people are so much more eager to fight than them folks in north Alabama. These people are fighting for beauty, for wealth and the pride of their lovely homes. We had nothing to fight for in North Alabama like these people have."

* * *

Cherry was almost awe-stricken as Margarette led her into her bedroom. "This is ours. I will be so glad to have you share it with me as long as you like," the girl told Cherry as they entered.

"Oh, thank you ever so much, it's beautiful!" Cherry gasped as she stood beholding herself in the full-length mirror in the door of the clothes cupboard. Then Cherry turned to see the elaborate mahogany poster bed with its beautiful pink canopy above it.

"You may have one side of this cupboard for your clothes and I will have mine on the other," Margarette offered as she opened the cupboard and showed her the space.

"Well," Cherry accepted reluctantly. It wasn't that she didn't appreciate the offer for the place for her clothes, but because she knew that she would be ashamed to hang

her modest dresses in the cupboard beside the beautiful, rich, pretentious wardrobe that Margarette had. "We will have our trunks brought in for us in a few moments," Cherry finished. They had left them on the porch at the driveway.

"We will show Mark his room upstairs next, and then have your trunks brought," Margarette informed Cherry. "Why did your mother say it was that he was with you?" she asked Cherry with more than ordinary interest.

"He and his people are dear friends of our family," Cherry explained. "We became acquainted when I was in school in Huntsville. His sister, Adelle, was my roommate. When Mark came for her Christmas, I went with them on my way home and spent the night with them in Decatur. Later, when the Yankees captured Huntsville and Decatur, Mark was the one who came for and got us out of Huntsville before the capture. His folks left Decatur ahead of the Yanks and went to our place in Winston for a long time. When Pappa went into the service a little over a month ago he asked for Mark to be sent back to our home to stay with Mamma and me and to bring us to Montgomery."

"My, but you must count yourself very fortunate indeed, then, to have such a handsome young man with you. There are certainly not many ladies who are so fortunate as to have a man of his age around. It will be pleasant for both of us to have a man like him about for an escort when we want to attend a dance or a social. We don't have many now because there are so few men to attend."

Cherry smiled wanly. She had no interest in parties and dances with the country in the state it was — and without Bill Walker to attend them with her.

As the two girls came back down the hallway they saw their mothers directing Mark up the stairs to show him his room.

"Golly," Margarette chuckled, hinting around for information, "I'll bet you think a lot of him, don't you? He's sure good looking."

"I guess he's more like a brother to me — that is, I've never had a brother, but he sort of seems like one to me — and nothing else," Cherry assured her.

"Well, I'll bet he'll sure be the cause of a lot of envy among the ladies, if he stays around here long," Margarette predicted.

Margarette was a beautiful girl, with fine features and a beautiful complexion and graceful manners. She could not have been a day over twenty.

A bit later, when Mark came back downstairs, he looked handsomer than ever, freshly washed and shaved and with a new change of clothing.

Cherry and Margarette smiled admiringly at him.

"I have an invitation to tea at a neighbor's down the street a bit," suggested Margarette. "She has already heard of you two being here, Cherry and Mark, and wants me to bring you both along with me."

"That will be swell; we'll be glad to go, won't we, Cherry?" Mark looked expectantly at Cherry.

Cherry hesitated. She had a pretty good notion that Margarette wouldn't mind being able to go to the tea alone with Mark, so she decided to play into the other girl's hands. "I am afraid that I will not be able to go," she excused herself. "I never thought of such things when we were packing to come. I didn't bring my evening gown and slippers — of course I can get some later, but — not

right now. But you two run along and have a good time."

"Then you will go with me, won't you, Mr. McDowell?" Margarette said, looking hopefully at Mark. "You look so nice in your uniform. It is not really going to be so very formal anyway. Mrs. Clark is just inviting a group of the service men from the camp over to her house and she wanted a bunch of girls to come along with them."

Mark turned to look at Cherry as Margarette went into the house. "I feel, well, not right, to go — if you can't go," he said.

"Oh, that's all right," laughed Cherry, "I don't mind. I'm rather tired anyway from the trip — but if you feel up to it, it's nice that you can go with Margarette. After all, she and her mother have been so nice to us — it's good you can go out with her now."

After a short while Margarette reappeared in full evening gown and all that went with it, walking airily into the room.

"Are you ready, Mr. McDowell?" she said, holding out her hand in white satin glove to invite Mark to come with her. "I'm ever so sorry, Cherry — if you'd like, you could have any of my other dresses — but —"

"I don't think they'd fit me," supplemented Cherry. "No, I'm rather tired, anyway, and wouldn't feel too much like going. You've already done so much for mother and me — run along and have a good time, you two."

Mark turned to look a bit guiltily at Cherry as he and Margarette went through the door. Cherry smiled bravely after them.

Chapter XXI

ANOTHER CONFLICT

Mrs. Lynn had just returned from town and stopped on the porch where Mrs. Parker was sitting in a big wicker chair.

"Oh, Mrs. Parker," she cried in exasperation, "it is getting to be so terrible — not even a pound of salt to be bought in the whole town. They say that there is not even enough for the men in the armies, and they are without a grain in the training camp here in Montgomery."

"Perhaps I can help you with that," volunteered Mrs. Parker. "We have had that problem for a long time in north Alabama."

Mrs. Lynn looked at her in hopeful surprise. "I would be terribly happy if you could — I just wonder what could be your solution," she said wonderingly and came and sat down in another chair beside her guest.

"We had been boiling the dirt in our smokehouses and getting a little salt that way for a long time before we came here," said Mrs. Parker.

"Boiling dirt in the smokehouse for salt?" Mrs. Lynn interrupted in astonishment. "What, that is the most amazing thing I ever heard of — how do you do it?"

"Well, if you are without salt I shall be glad to take your cook and Cherry and we will get the dirt from your smokehouse and fill up your wash-pot with it and boil it for the salt," suggested Mrs. Parker willingly.

"Why, I should be delighted to know that we would

even be able to obtain any salt that way," said the other woman. She rose from her seat. "If that is the way we may get salt I will have the cooks set up the wash-pot right now and you may show them how and they will do the work."

As Mrs. Lynn went on into the house, Cherry came onto the porch and her mother immediately noticed a strange expression indicative of discontent on her face.

"Cherry, dear," her mother spoke firmly, "what is your trouble now? For land sakes, don't tell me that you and Margarette are at odds with each other again."

Cherry sat down on a foot stool and braced her chin with her hands. "Mamma, I wish we were back at home," she said in a pathetic sounding voice and with a dejected manner.

"But, honey — you must be considerate of these people. They are giving us a good home here and we just must be grateful enough to them that we will get along with them while we are here. It's utterly out of the question for us to go back, perhaps for a long time still," Mrs. Parker said, trying to soothe her daughter, but knowing it was hard to do.

"But Mamma — that Margarette," complained Cherry, "she just drives me about out of my wits! All in the world she can ever talk about, every minute that I am around her is Mark! Mark! Mark! I am so tired of it I could pop!" She banged her fist viciously against her knee.

"I am sure Mark must understand that he owes her a debt of gratitude for their hospitalities and he will want to be very kind and considerate with her. After all, Cherry — though perhaps your father and I hope it, I don't believe you've ever been in love with Mark — you're still in

love with that Bill Walker — so, why should you feel so hurt about this?"

Cherry forced a weak smile. "Oh, it's just that I get tired of hearing her keep gushing so — and I happen to know that Mark is not so very elated with her attentions at all. But if you were to listen to Margarette, you would think that they already had their wedding date set."

"Cherry," her mother said shocked, "are you sure that Margarette is not just trying to be hospitable to him as she is to the rest of us? Why should you care, anyway — as long as you aren't in love with Mark?"

Cherry tried to smile again but said poutingly, "Sure, it makes the difference in that one woman can't stand to see another have a man when she hasn't one. I suppose, though, I should be glad for Mark's and Margarette's sakes — they are both nice enough — I am positive that Margarette is head over heels in love with Mark!"

Just then Mrs. Lynn came to the door and called, "Mrs. Parker, the maids are ready to help with the cooking the dirt for salt now, if you are ready to show them."

Mrs. Parker rose and went with her leaving Cherry still sitting on the stool with her chin propped in her palms. Cherry sat there for quite some time half consciously watching the pedestrians passing along the street, just thinking.

"Hello, Cherry," a pleasant voice startled her out of her reverie.

She looked up. "Well, Mark," she cried, locking her fingers together and sliding them down around her knees. "You scared me. I guess I wasn't expecting to see you."

"Cherry," Mark spoke seriously, "I have been wishing for a week, really, ever since we have been down here, that

I could get the chance to speak to you — alone. I have been wanting to tell you —"

"About your friend, Margarette?" Cherry interrupted in a jealous manner.

"Listen, Cherry," Mark begged, "I can't help but be nice and congenial with these people in return for the hospitality of their home — it's the least I can do. I have at least got to be sociable with Margarette. But, believe me, Cherry, Margarette Lynn doesn't mean a thing in the world to me. You are the one that I am interested in. You are the one that I feel I am obligated to."

"You are certainly not obligated to me!" Cherry returned as she looked at Mark out of the corner of her eye a bit wistfully.

"Then, maybe, it's to your father," Mark reminded her. "I guess that it is your father that I am obligated to to look after his family. But I am sure happy with my responsibilities. Only, I wish I had the confidence of his daughter more," Mark hinted.

Just then the door opened and Margarette came out onto the porch. "Oh, Mark," she gushed, "I was just hoping that I would find you here. I have been waiting for an hour for you. Mrs. Throckmartin has invited us to her house this evening for tea and games with a group of young service men and their girl-friends. I told her that you and I would be there. She wants us to come at seven. You will be ready to go by six-thirty, won't you, Mark?"

Mark stood silently, looking first at Cherry, then at Margarette. An expression of indecision swept over his face. But finally he nodded in the affirmative and went to his room.

Cherry continued sitting on the stool. She was more conscious now of the persons passing the house. "Chris

Sheets," she wondered then why in the world the name of Chris Sheets had ever popped into her mind.

"Chris Sheets is in jail here in Montgomery somewhere," she thought. "I want to see that man, if I can find where he is. I have heard so much about him. It wouldn't do to tell Mamma and Mrs. Lynn though, that I am wanting to see a Tory. And Mark would sure not want to go with me to see one, even if he had time to go anywhere with anyone besides that designing Margarette."

She sat for a long time contemplating the thought of how she could manage to see Chris Sheets.

A bit later Cherry was surprised again, for as she looked toward the road, she saw coming up the walk, Mrs. Kaiser, their old neighbor in Brown Creek Bottom.

"Well, bless my day if it isn't Cherry Parker!" cried the old woman as she caught sight of Cherry. "Howdy, Cherry! I am so glad to see you and to know you are here and well — I suppose your mother is here with you?" She came up on the porch and embraced Cherry.

"Howdy, Mrs. Kaiser," Cherry returned pleasantly.

Mrs. Parker had heard her talking and now ran on the porch to greet her.

"Well, good afternoon, Mrs. Kaiser!" she shouted as the two grabbed each other in a warm embrace. "Will you go in and meet Mrs. Lynn and Margarette, our hosts?"

"Oh, I do wish that had time, but I haven't now," Mrs. Kaiser excused herself. "I just arrived here in Montgomery and I came to bring you this letter from your dear husband. I knew you would be so anxious to hear from him." She handed Mrs. Parker a letter.

"Thank you, Mrs. Kaiser, so much," said Cherry's mother, and she and Cherry, being so excited over the letter, even forgot to ask Mrs. Kaiser where she would be

staying, as they tore the envelope open and jerked out the contents and began to read.

The letter ran as follows:

Pulaski, Tennessee
May 1st, 1864

"Dear Wife and Daughter:

I truly hope that Providence will help to deliver this letter to you. Although it has been only three months since I left you, it seems like ages since I last saw you.

I have been in North Alabama two or three times since I have been with Hood's army. It is a good thing you left North Alabama, because there are thousands of deserters from Hood's army there and thousands of deserters in the hills of Alabama and Tennessee. They are bad, killing lots of folks.

Zeb was last seen when we were having to force our way across the Tennessee River. I don't know what became of him, whether he was captured, killed or drowned. I hope he will show up again some day. One of the horses has been killed. I am riding the other in service.

May the Lord keep and bless you until the war is ended and we meet again.

Lovingly, your husband and father,
Nat Parker."

Having finished reading the letter, "Where is Mrs. Kaiser?" Mrs. Parker asked, looking around and seeing that the other woman was gone. "I do hope we didn't slight her, but we were so anxious about the letter."

"Oh, Mamma, I do wish so badly that we were back

home," Cherry sighed, placing her head on her mother's shoulder.

"So do I, dear," Mrs. Parker said, patting the girl's shoulder and trying to console her. "But that's out of the question now, honey. With all them deserters about there, it would be too bad. But, now, dear, I must hurry back and see how the salt is coming on."

* * *

In the summer of 1864, the Federals in Rome, Georgia, asked for volunteers to go back to Decatur and go on raids from there back into Winston and Marion Counties and recruit all the Confederate deserters they could into the Federal forces. John R. Phillips volunteered for this duty and was sent back. When the group on the train reached Decatur, they were met by Bill Looney, who was still as free and active as ever, and directed through Davis Gap back toward Winston County.

"Ye better be on the lookout all the time fer them blasted Rebels when we git back in Winston County," Looney informed the group as they were getting near the Winston County line, "cause there's still a lot uv them home-guards that is lyin' around snipin on folks as they pass through. All thar bunches have done been busted up, but they air still lyin' around with thar rifles to crack at anybody who comes along."

"Who has run them out?" Phillips asked him.

"Old George Stout has killed a whole bunch uv em and just about drove em out uv the country, but thar's still a few around."

"Which ones has Stout managed to kill?" Phillips wanted to know.

"Old Jim Mooney, Al Gibson, Jim Downey and old

Burke Roberts are the main leaders and are the main ones. He and his gang have killed a lot of others too, but they're the main uns."

"Good," exclaimed Phillips with satisfaction. "I'm shore glad to hear that somebody has got old Gibson and Roberts! Now I wish somebody would git old Ham Carpenter."

* * *

After camping through the night in Lawrence County, the group of about a dozen men reached Winston County after traveling until about noon the next day. They were riding along peacefully when they met a man on a small mule. The man turned and would have tried to get away, but he was given no chance — Bill Looney recognized him and grabbed his gun from his belt and shot him through the heart, and then went on with the party, leaving the man he'd just killed lying where he had fallen from his mule.

"My God, Bill," a young man by the name of Carter asked, shocked, "what did you do that for? He didn't look like he wanted to harm anybody."

"Who was he?" Phillip Sutton wanted to know.

"That skunk," Bill Looney explained, "wuz in Roddy's gang that tried to hang me near Decatur once when them Yankees luckily for me come up and run them off. Old Jeff wuz the man that tied the rope around my neck. I bin wishin' ever since I got away that I could meet the dickense sometime!"

The group rode on down to the foot of a big hill in the mountains, heading for where they knew there was a good place to eat and water their horses.

"This looks like a quiet place. Maybe it would do for

us to sleep a while here and rest our horses," Bill Elkins suggested to the group.

Hardly had he spoken the words, however, when a volley of shots rang out from the top of the hill and Ollie Carter and Phillip Sutton both toppled over dead.

The rest of the men ducked for cover in alarm, leaving all their provisions of blankets and coats tied on a couple of ponies. But when they recovered their presence of mind and from places of cover they returned the fire. For about a half hour the skirmish continued until the Rebels had exhausted their ammunition, and the Tories were still supplied and able to turn the tables on them somewhat, but by then, too, most of the Tories were pretty well scattered and exhausted.

One of the Tories, John Phillips, finally sank down to rest by a large rock with a hole in it — and then he sighted a couple of heads sticking out of it and raised his gun to fire at them, but found himself already covered.

As the two raised up, he recognized them as his friends, Bill Looney and Bill Elkins.

"Don't shoot, men! I'm John Phillips!" he shouted.

"Don't you shoot neither, John! We are Bill Elkins and Bill Looney!" came the response.

John went on up to them and found a Negro in the hole behind them. The Negro had some roasting ears and potatoes which he was sharing with them.

"Have something to eat, John," they invited as they emerged from the hole.

John did, and, as all were ravenous, they made a good meal and felt much better for it.

The rest of the men were still scattered and never were gotten all together again.

John Phillips soon found himself in distress. "I've got

dysentery," he complained, and decided to stop at a place owned by Sammy Spain, a few miles southeast of Double-Spring. There, old lady Spain took him to a bluff with some quilts and made him a pallet. She gave him food and tea and medicine for several days, until he was well enough to go on again to his home.

The sun was hardly up and a heavy fog covered everything till one could see but a short way when John ran up onto his porch. His wife was so excited at his appearance that she started to run from the house out the back door.

"Mahala!" John called as he saw her about to leave. "Don't run away — it's me, John, back again!"

"John! Why, bless my soul, if it ain't my dear husband!" cried the woman joyfully, and turned and ran to him with outstretched arms.

For a few moments both were too overcome to talk but just clung to each other, thrilling with pleasure to be together again.

Then, "John," his wife gasped, "how come you here? How did you get back?" She looked at him inquiringly, fear still in her eyes.

"I volunteered to come back from Rome, Georgia, to get recruits for the Yanks," he told her. "Bill Looney met us at Decatur and brought us a ways. We had a narrow escape in eastern Winston County; two of our crowd were killed. I took sick on the way and had to lie under a bluff near Sammy Spain's place for a week before I could come on home."

"Come on into the house — I'll tell the children you're here. They'll be so happy," Mahala urged.

As they walked into the house, "How are things about here now, honey?" he inquired. "Are there any home-guards about now?"

"There ain't many home-guards here like they was," she assured him, having got the children whom he now gathered into his arms and hugged and kissed affectionately.

"My, how you little ones have grown up!" he cried admiringly. "It's good to hold you close again and kiss you!"

His wife continued, "There's still a lot of home-guards, though — and the woods are full of deserters from Hood's army and they are killing folks, too. Some of them have gone to the Yankees and a lot of them are out robbing and stealing all the time. The home-guards were all gone while Old George Stout was in this country, but him and his bunch are gone now and a lot of them Rebel home-guards are back around here."

"I see," John said, "I'll have to be careful. I'll tell ye, Mahala, I'll stay with you today, and tonight I'm going to slip over to the old out-house on Wiley Branch, and you can slip me some food along and I'll get to stay here at least for a while."

"I'll shore be glad to do it, John," she said, "but I'm awful feared them Rebels will find you yet. They do awful things to the men they catch!"

John stayed in the old house for two or three weeks, slipping back at night to his house. Finally he managed to steal a good horse from one of the Rebel soldiers who had deserted from Hood's army and went back to Decatur. When he returned he found his regiment had already left Rome, Georgia, and had gone with Sherman on his march to the sea.

* * *

The people of Montgomery were feeling the effects of the war more and more. Meetings were being held at

various places, petitioning the Confederate government for salt and to leave the rest of their slaves.

News of Yankee raids from Decatur through Jefferson, St. Clair and Talladega Counties kept the people of central Alabama in constant fear.

"Oh, I am so sorry, Mrs. Parker," Mrs. Lynn apologized to her guest one day, because of the conditions, "that our food is growing so scarce. It is getting to where we can hardly get bread any more. And our slaves are all being impressed into service."

"Don't apologize, Mrs. Lynn," Mrs. Parker soothed, "we are still doing quite well, I am sure. Perhaps we are fortunate to be alive. I feel guilty that we are still staying with you, imposing on you so."

"That's all right, bless you," Mrs. Lynn assured her. "But if anyone had told me at the beginning of the war that we would ever be reduced to such poverty, I would never have believed it."

"I was compelled to confess the same, in our section of the state, some time ago," agreed Mrs. Parker.

"And with the port of Mobile blockaded and soldiers ready to march on every fort in the state and raids continually being launched from Florence and Decatur, there is no telling when we may have to leave our homes here," sighed Mrs. Lynn, not trying to hide her anxiety about the situation.

Just then Cherry came running into the house in a burst of excitement. "Oh, Mamma," she called to Mrs. Parker as her mother and Mrs. Lynn were on their way to the vegetable garden.

"What is it, dear?" Mrs. Parker turned to Cherry as Mrs. Lynn went on toward the garden.

"Guess where I've been?" Cherry cried, smiling and waving her hands excitedly.

"Why, there are so many places you may have been," her mother laughed.

"Guess who I saw!" Cherry continued.

"That might be even harder. Was it someone from North Alabama?" Her mother was growing anxious to hear who it might be.

"I'll tell you, Mamma, but I wouldn't want you to tell anybody else," Cherry said more seriously.

"Well, I should say that is indeed strange. It certainly doesn't make it any easier for me to guess who it was. Who is it?"

"I went to the jail house and saw Chris Sheets," Cherry almost whispered it as if she were afraid to tell.

"Cherry!" Her mother looked at her shocked, with grave apprehension.

"I did! The jail man didn't care for me seeing him. I have always wanted to see him — I'd heard so much about him. Did you ever see Chris Sheets, Mamma?"

"No! No, I've never seen him. 'I've heard your Pappa talk a lot about him, though."

"That's why I was so anxious to see him, and, Mamma, you just ought to see him. I went real close to him. He is so different from what I thought he would be. I always thought from what Pappa said about him that he was a big, old man; that he would be a terrible sight, but Mamma, he is a young man —the handsomest fellow I ever saw. His hair is long; he needs a hair cut, but it is so black and wavy and his eyes are so blue — they are almost black. He is a good looking man."

"Cherry — you must be very careful that you don't see him too much and say so much about him around here

that you will provoke the enmity of the people on you for being too friendly with the Tories." her mother cautioned.

"Hu —!" Cherry threw her chin up. "I guess I'll not let anybody tell me who I can see!" She started haughtily on to her room. She and Margarette had for some time been occupying individual rooms. Cherry's was now the guest bedroom downstairs.

"This is one time that it is good for her Pappa to be away, I wager," Mrs. Parker said aloud to herself as Cherry left. "This would be more than he could ever stand if he knew that Cherry had gone to see Chris Sheets!"

The woman continued thinking about Sheets — and then of Mark. His father was now in a Yankee prison somewhere as a hostage for Chris Sheets. It would not do to let Mark know that Cherry had gone to see him. Cherry would be sure to tell him though, the very first time Mark was about. Mrs. Parker went on toward the garden where Mrs. Lynn was.

* * *

A short time later as Cherry was coming through the hall to the reception hall, Mark came half-loping down the stairway as he heard her.

"Cherry!" he called in a loud whisper, "wait, I want to talk to you, Cherry!"

Cherry didn't stop until she was in the reception room, however. Mark came on behind her.

"Listen, Cherry," he begged. There was a note of seriousness in his appeal. "I have been trying for a week to get to speak to you."

"What do you want, Mark?" She appeared utterly disinterested.

"Sit down here, Cherry." Mark pointed to a chair as he started pulling another up beside it.

Cherry sat in the rocker, slapping her open palms on the arms of the chair.

"Cherry," he pleaded, "I've just got to do something. You just must help me. I can't stand that Margarette any longer. Can't we — you and me, plan some place to go that we can get away from her for a night?" He seemed desperate about it.

Cherry smiled in spite of herself. "But you've got to be kind and considerate of their hospitality, you know," she teased.

"Listen, Cherry," he urged desperately, rubbing his forehead with his fingers. "Don't be naughty and catty! I am dead serious about this thing! I've got to do something. I can't stand that girl any longer."

"But you have gone with her somewhere almost every night since we have been here. Looks like you should be fond of her by now," Cherry insisted, unrelentingly.

"Cherry, can't I tell you?" Mark scratched his head dejectedly. "That is the trouble; I've been with her too much! I am so tired of that girl and her constant parties. She is out now, planning another one somewhere. I want to tell you that you are the only girl that I care for, Cherry."

"But it wouldn't do to offend our hosts, you know! She wouldn't like it if you didn't go with her." Cherry turned her face away from Mark to keep him from seeing the smile of satisfaction she had from knowing he was tired of Margarette.

"Cherry," his plea was pitiful, "can't we do something? Can't we have some place to go or something to do that

I can have an excuse to stay with you? Can't you get your Mamma to help you to think of something?"

"Mark," Cherry turned back to him, trying hard to keep a straight face, "don't you like to go with Margarette to the teas and socials?"

"Like it? Ugh!" He gestured that he was sick of it. "I am so tired of them parties and them society belles and their ways that I could vomit! I've never wanted to be away from any place so bad in all my life. I hate the whole thing. I had rather be in the cavalry than to be here."

"Why don't you plan something for yourself, Mark?" Cherry queried.

"Plan something? There is nothing for me to plan! Besides, the women are the ones who always do the planning. And if I should plan anything, she would think that I was slighting her." Mark was more and more disgusted. "If you had something to do, or some place to go, then I —" he hesitated, "You could ask me to go with you," he suggested.

"Then if Margarette didn't like it —?"

"I'd at least have an excuse!" He jumped over near her as he interrupted her statement. "Besides, I am supposed to stay with you and look after you. Don't you remember?"

"But you didn't do it today, Mark. I slipped off and went to see a good looking prisoner at the jail," she returned lightly.

"Cherry! You don't mean — who did you see?" he was intensely interested suddenly.

"I'd better not tell you, Mark; you might not approve," she teased.

"Approve?" He was more curious than ever now. "Cherry, I don't approve of your slipping away to see anyone. And right now when — I'm, I'm —" he swallowed hard. "When I'm needing you to help me out of this jam, when I'm in love with — you — you start thinking of someone else!"

"Ah, hush, Mark! You sound so pathetic!" she chided as she left the room.

Alone, Mark sat rolling his chin in his palms. "Doggone it!" he said to himself, "I am doomed! That's the last straw! That girl will be here again soon, directing me to get ready to go somewhere. I despise her. I'd rather go to the cavalry, if it weren't for Cherry — and she don't seem to care. Won't ever even listen. I came here with her to protect her — if it wasn't for her and my having given my word, I'd leave this place and this mess at once. Why can't something happen to somebody, to me or Cherry, or Margarette?" He arose from his chair and went to his room upstairs.

"Mark!" Cherry called loudly from the hall just as Mark reached the door of his room.

"Mother wants me to go over to where Mrs. Kaiser is staying and take a message for her. Do you want to go along with me?"

"Hooray! Anywhere — and, by gosh, I hope we get lost and don't get back for hours!" he smiled, coming to join her without hesitation.

Chapter XXII

A SUNDAY HERO

"We must really brace ourselves to endure it," affirmed Mrs. Parker to Mrs. Lynn and Mrs. Throckmorton, as the three wended their way to church one Sunday. "There is nothing else we can do about it. After all, we are still in a section of the state that has virtually been untouched by the war, except that we've had to give up our slaves and most of our luxuries. Now, if you ladies had lived in the section where we came from and experienced the killings and hardships which we have known, you could appreciate the blessings which we still have here."

"But it does seem so horrible that we have had to give up so much," sighed Mrs. Throckmorton. "Here we are, our carriages gone and we have to walk to church. It is the worst we have ever known."

"It does seem hard to give up our conveniences," agreed Mrs. Lynn. "However, I do feel, as Mrs. Parker has said, that we have only had to give up our slaves and carriages and luxuries, instead of our homes and everything we have."

"I hope that this is the worst we will ever have to experience here," continued Mrs. Parker. "But I fear that as the Confederacy is reduced, we may be called upon to make greater sacrifices than we have even thought of yet."

"I wonder how you imagine it could be any worse," declared Mrs. Throckmorton with a note of sarcasm in her voice.

It was a Sunday in the late summertime of the year, 1864. The sun was shining brightly and the several blocks walked to the church had brought much perspiration to the faces of all three women. Mrs. Throckmorton was fanning and wiping the perspiration from her face with her handkerchief. The churches of Montgomery were holding special prayer services in behalf of the Confederacy and the Southern armies.

Meanwhile — as the three older women headed for church, Lylian Throckmorton, the daughter of Mrs. Throckmorton, had gone by the Lynn home for Margarette.

"Are you ready, Marge?" the girl called as she entered the spacious porch of the Lynn home.

"I don't know whether I even feel like going to church or not," Margarette told her dejectedly.

The other girl looked at her in surprise. "Oh, come on, Marge," she coaxed. "You'll most likely feel better once you meet with the group at church today."

"The group don't interest me," Margarette told her emphatically.

"Oh, come now, Marge. You'll get to see Mark there, don't you know," Lylian teased. "He and Cherry are done gone, I suppose."

"Cherry —" Margarette snarled, flushing angrily, "I'd like nothing better than to wring that pullet's neck! I'd do it for her, too, if I could get the chance."

"Oh, Marge — you shouldn't say anything like that!" gasped the other girl, shocked.

"I should, too! That spiteful wretch! She isn't anything any way, but a poor backwoods hussy!"

"But I thought that you and Cherry had gotten along splendidly," Lylian interrupted.

"Her?" Margarette said with a sneer, "I'd done a had her and her old Ma both run off if it hadn't been for Mark. They are nothing anyway but trash. I don't see why mother ever let them come to our house for in the first place."

"Come on, Marge — you'll feel better when we get on our way," Lylian urged. "I've seen you this way before. You can't tell — you may get to come back from church with Mark yet."

Margarette decided to come and the two of them left the house and headed for the church, walking rather fast.

"We are bound to be late now," Lylian said, a bit reproachfully. "You took so much time before you ever decided to go."

"I still don't much care whether we get there at all or not," Margarette said, still moody.

They arrived in church several minutes after the services had started. After slipping quietly in a back pew, they sat silently for several minutes. During all this time, Margarette scanned all those present in the hope of glimpsing Mark, but she was disappointed. He was not present, or, if present, she could not find him.

"I wonder where Mark is — yonder is Cherry and the rest of our folks," Margarette whispered to Lylian.

Lylian frowned at her, indicating an unspoken reprimand to Margarette for whispering during the services and shrugged her shoulders.

The rest of the time she was quiet, but still too much occupied thinking about Mark's not being present to give much attention to either the prayers or the message. She heaved a sigh of relief when the benediction was finally given, for her curiosity had well nigh exhausted her patience. She waited in tense anxiety as the audience filed

down the aisle toward the door and when she found her chance to speak to Cherry, asked her, "Cherry, where is Mark? Why isn't he here?"

She joined the line beside Cherry as they were passing out of the door.

Cherry answered quickly, smiling. "He received word as we arrived that Colonel Adams had asked to see him at once. He left immediately to see what he wanted and hasn't returned. I am afraid the Colonel is calling Mark back into service. In fact, I wondered that it hadn't been done long ago." She smiled sweetly.

The three girls, Lylian, Margarette and Cherry, walked on toward their homes together, fanning themselves with their handkerchiefs at times for the weather was hot that late summer day.

"Phew!" complained Lylian, "This weather is so hot! I wish I could run and jump in the river!" She dabbed at her damp, hot face with her dainty, inadequate handkerchief.

"I know where a skiff is — let's take a ride in it this afternoon. Would you like to?" Margarette suggested suddenly.

"That would suit me fine," Cherry agreed. "I've not found anything like that to do since I came here."

"We will go then as soon as we can get dinner," Lylian proposed as she left Margarette and Cherry at their walk and started on toward her own home.

Margarette and Cherry, still not speaking much to one another, waited in wicker chairs on the cool front porch until their mothers should arrive.

Before long the two women arrived.

"Oh, I thought it was a wonderful service, didn't you,

girls?" Mrs. Lynn gushed enthusiastically, as she and Mrs. Parker came up the steps.

"I thought it was very inspiring and comforting," agreed Cherry.

Margarette didn't say anything — she sat quietly, hoping she would not be asked any direct questions about the services. She went on into the house after a bit, and was, for the first time, conscious that she had sat through the entire services of the church without realizing what was done or said. She now recognized the fact that her mind had been on Mark so completely that she had missed the service. It had been a drudgery, she felt, instead of a beautiful service.

Mrs. Parker turned to her daughter. "Why was Mark called away, Cherry?" she asked.

"I don't know," said the girl with a sigh. "But Colonel Adams is the one who sent for him. Very likely he is intending to call him into the service again."

They went into the house to prepare for their dinner. As they sat down at the table Mrs. Lynn called to her daughter, but Margarette replied rather wanly, "Go ahead and eat without me. I don't feel like having a bite."

Mrs. Lynn shook her head and a troubled expression came over her face. "Margarette must not be feeling well," she said sadly. "She hasn't been her old, usual self lately."

Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Lynn and Cherry had begun eating when they heard Lylian, Margarette's girl-friend, come to the front door and call, "Marge! Marge! Are you ready?"

"In a minute," they heard Margarette reply. Shortly, the girl appeared at the dining-room door. She looked in at Cherry and asked, "Are you ready?"

Cherry remembered what she and the other girls had planned and to which she looked forward with pleasure.

"I'm just finished," she said, although she hadn't finished her dinner, and leaped up from the table. "Excuse me," she said to her mother and hostess.

"If Mark returns, tell him that we girls are taking a walk down beside the river," Margarette explained to her mother as the two girls went out.

"Bless them! They do seem so happy and full of life," Mrs. Lynn said with a relieved smile to Mrs. Parker. "I believe Margarette is feeling better. It's a tragedy though, that the young things have to be so deprived by the war, isn't it?"

Mrs. Parker nodded and replied with a touch of apathy in her voice. "Poor children — the Lord only knows the fate that's ahead of them with the war getting worse day by day."

"I am so glad that the three of them are getting so reconciled to each other. I was afraid of dissension growing between them, but I reckon there is not — the way the three were so eager to go off this beautiful Sunday afternoon together," said Mrs. Lynn relieved and happily.

* * *

A short time later Mark came into the house in a burst of enthusiasm. His whistling a cheery little melody indicated his spirits were blithe.

"You must have good news to be so happy, Mark," Mrs. Lynn observed, nodding for him to come to the table and eat.

"Very good," he replied with a smile. "I was afraid when Colonel Adams called me that I might have to go to service, but it was about another matter he wanted to see

me this time. Where are the girls?" he inquired, on noticing they were not around.

"I believe they said they were going walking down toward the river. Lylian came by and called for them," Mrs. Lynn told him.

"I believe I will run down and tell them my good news — I know they are both anxious to know about the call I had from Colonel Adams this morning," Mark said, turning to go without sitting down at the table.

"Aren't you going to eat before you go, Mark?" Mrs. Parker asked as he turned to leave.

"No, no, thanks," he said, shaking his head. "In fact, I'm not hungry. I want to be sure and see the girls before they get to the river." He was hurrying out of the door as he spoke.

* * *

"Poor Mark," Mrs. Lynn observed. "He seems to think so much of the girls, feels so obligated. Always so eager to look after them and go with them wherever they go." She sighed. "He has been so generous, so kind to Margarette, to be willing to go with her any place. He has just been like a brother to both of them."

Mrs. Parker nodded.

* * *

The three girls had walked through the woods, along the river, quite some distance up-stream above the docks.

"Oh, it is so cool and pleasant along here, isn't it? Such a fine place to escape the heat of the afternoon," Lylian said appreciatively as they walked along. "I wish we could move our house to a place like this on these hot days."

"And it is so beautiful and quiet," added Cherry. "Oh, look — what is that?" she inquired.

"That is Spanish moss," Lylian informed her.

"Didn't you ever see any moss like that before?" Margarette wanted to know.

"Never. That's the first that I have ever seen like that," the girl said, greatly interested, and trying to reach a bunch that hung from the limb of a small tree.

"Here is the skiff — let's take a boat-ride," Margarette now suggested, catching hold of the chain the craft was anchored with and starting to draw it to the bank.

"We had better not get out onto the river in that," Lylian warned. "We don't know how to paddle that thing."

"Ah, we'll stay close along the bank, in the still water," Margarette returned. "Here, Cherry, you hold the chain till we get in and we will hold it till you get in then," she told Cherry, who was just then coming up with her hands full of the beautiful grey Spanish moss.

"Gee, I don't know how to handle this thing," Cherry said, but she held the chain anyway till the other girls were seated in the middle and on the back end of the skiff.

"Throw the chain in the boat and jump in now," Margarette told her.

Cherry placed the chain in the skiff and stepped in with her left foot. The skiff began to push out from the bank.

"Oh, oh!" screamed the girl as she saw she could neither get in the boat or back on the bank, and that she was about to fall in the water. The skiff was gliding farther from shore and she lost her balance and with a splash landed in the water.

"Help! Help!" she screamed, and both girls in the boat screamed with her and tried to help but didn't know what to do.

Margarette, especially, seemed frozen to her seat by the excitement. Cherry had fallen into the water backward and sank immediately.

"Oh! She'll be drowned!" Lylian wailed hysterically. She leaped up and leaned over the side and the skiff started to take in water over the side.

"Catch her hand! Catch her clothes!" Margarette shouted to Lylian as Cherry rose sputtering to the surface. But before they could catch her, Cherry turned over and started down again.

Just then Mark burst upon the scene. He had heard the girls' screams and was running at top speed. He caught a glimpse of Cherry as she sank the second time and dashed to the river's bank and without an instant's hesitation, dived into the water. The other two girls watched hopeful but horrified. In a matter of seconds Mark had reappeared, holding Cherry and towed her to the shore and climbed up the bank, dragging the girl after him. Then he called to Margarette to throw the chain to him and pulled the skiff in to shore and made it fast.

As the girls got out, Mark was working over Cherry, forcing the water from her lungs. Hysteria gripped both girls as they watched Mark trying to bring the air into the girl's breast once again.

"Oh, is she dead? She's dead!" Lylian lamented.

Margarette stood in wild-eyed panic, wringing her hands.

But in a few minutes Mark's efforts were rewarded. Cherry began to breathe. Her lips were blue, her eyes were closed. She turned over and vomited more water. Mark continued working frantically on her but with less desperation now. Perspiration was streaming down his face. Finally Cherry sat up, coughing and groaning.

"Oh, oh!" she screamed as Mark tried to get her to stand up, and seized her right leg.

"What's the matter?" Mark asked, and examined her leg, and a moment later looked at her with a serious expression on his face. "It's broken, just above the ankle," he announced. Cherry could not stand at all.

"Lord! How will we ever get her to the house?" Lylian asked puzzled.

Without words, Mark simply lifted Cherry into his arms and started toward the house.

"Oh, please, let's not tell Mamma I was so nearly drowned, will you, please?" Cherry begged as they went along.

Mark shrugged.

"She'll have to know something, for how will you account for being all wet and having a broken leg?" Mark told her.

They had to go through a thickly populated part of town on their way home. And people, curious, came by the dozens running to ask what had happened. But Mark put them off and hurried right along, though people continued to trail them, morbidly curious.

Finally Mark stumbled into the home of Mrs. Lynn, carried Cherry to her room and placed her gently on her bed and sank down himself exhausted.

"Send for a doctor," Mark gasped. "Cherry's got a broken leg."

"How on earth did it happen?" Mrs. Parker asked of Lylian and Margarette. "Oh, my poor child!"

"We were getting into a skiff to take a ride, and she fell under the skiff as she was getting in," explained Lylian. "We thought she would drown, but Mark got there just in time to get her out."

"God bless that boy! I see now how much he has meant to all of us. I didn't understand to begin with why Mr. Parker wanted him to stay with us, but now I see. It was providential," Mrs. Parker confessed as she praised Mark for his heroic deed.

The sun was already shining the next morning when Mark awoke to come from his room.

"How's Cherry?" he inquired of Mrs. Lynn and Mrs. Parker, who were seated together down in the living room.

"Fine, Mark — how do you like this?" Mrs. Lynn showed him the morning paper, which had a picture of Mark on the front page and the headline, "A Sunday Hero."

Mark flushed with pride and confusion.

"I'm glad that I was able to save Cherry," he said. "That's all I cared about. I don't know what I would have done if she had died."

As Mark was strolling about the yard a bit later, after having eaten, Margarette found him.

"Oh, Mark," she said, "Mrs. Banks, a friend of ours, is entertaining several of the younger set in her home this evening and she wanted me to invite you to come along with me. She saw your picture in the paper this morning and said that all the folks would be wanting to meet you."

"I am sorry, Marge," he told her, shaking his head. "I'll have to disappoint her. I just wouldn't feel like going around to parties with Cherry still in bed and as sick as she is."

"Oh, nonsense! Her Ma and the colored maids can wait on her, Mark," Margarette argued. "There's no reason why you should have to tie yourself down to a servant's role to wait on that girl."

Mark smiled but shook his head firmly. "Her father

rather gave me that assignment," he explained. "I've got to keep my promise."

"Well, go ahead then, if you prefer such rather than to get acquainted and associate with people who can help you amount to something," Margarette said cattily and turned away indignantly.

* * *

In the late summer and fall of 1864, the Tennessee Valley in North Alabama was made a battleground again. Hood and Sherman were opposing each other with large armies.

A peculiar thing may here be told about Hood's army with respect to the people of the hills. When Hood was operating north of the Tennessee River, many of his recruits would desert and come back and lie out in the hills and mountains. Then when the Yankees would push his forces back south of the river, the people in hiding would begin to return and bolster his army. In this way there was a great fluctuation in the size of his forces, perhaps as much as ten to twelve thousand.

One man, Charlie Holt, a man in his late forties, had lain out in the bluffs and holes of eastern Marion County and the edge of Winston throughout the war. After Stout and his group had gone from that section, the home-guards had banded together once more and had been after Holt for several weeks. They had watched him so closely that he had been without food for several days.

"Elvin!" Holt's wife called to her nephew one Sunday morning, "I want you to take this bucket of victuals over on the bluff west uv old 'Bald Rock,' and hunt yer Uncle Charlie and give him somethin' to eat! He's bin a'layin' out a week, mighty nigh it, since he's had a bite. I know he must be about starved." She handed the young boy

the bucket. "Ye better care, son, that ye don't slip upon Uncle Charlie cause he's got his gun wid him an' he might shoot ye afore he recognizes ye."

The boy took the bucket of food and set out obediently to find his uncle. He walked for a long time in search for the bluff.

"I know I oughter find that bluff," he said to himself, "cause I've been to it lots uv times."

Finally he reached Bald Rock and was able to get his bearings. And a short time later, to his astonishment, he sighted his Uncle Charlie, asleep.

He stopped for a few seconds to make sure that the man was asleep instead of dead, then, "Uncle Charlie," he called in a soft, urgent tone, not wanting to excite or scare the man. "Uncle Charlie!" he called again.

Holt leaped up from the ground and without looking about to locate the voice, went bounding off the highest part of the bluff. It was a mighty leap. The bluff was eighty or ninety feet high. The boy went running after him to see what had happened to his uncle, mighty scared.

"I'll declare, Uncle Charlie, you look like a squirrel down there in the top uv that tree," he cried, relieved when he saw the man had lodged in the foliage of a huge beech tree growing at the foot of the bluff.

"My God, son!" Holt returned, on seeing who it was. "I guess it was a good thing I jumped off uv that bluff in my sleep. If I'd a been awake I might uv killed ye!"

He then climbed down as the boy went around to the foot of the tree to bring him the food.

* * *

Cherry was recovering slowly. One warm afternoon

Mark was pushing Cherry about the garden in a wheel-chair. The sun was shining warmly. However, there was a bit of a chill coming in the breeze. It was already well in the month of December. Frost had killed most of the vegetation except for the perennials.

"I am so happy to be out in the sunshine again, Mark," said Cherry happily. "You know it has been almost four months since the accident."

"Yes, dear — and we first thought that you would be well in a few days," said Mark. "The shock, exposure, and everything just got you down a lot more than anyone would have thought," he added.

"Yes — and that awful infection setting in — my leg is still not well. Oh, I love the scenery about here so much. It's wonderful being outside again. I am sorry though, that I have been so much trouble to you and the others at the house, Mark."

"I have loved every minute of it, Cherry," Mark assured her. "It gave me a good excuse, too, not to have to go running about with that Margarette."

"I should have thought you'd enjoy going about with her; she is a very attractive girl — and you'd have met all the best people."

He shook his head. "I don't like it at all — never did," he said. "All I need to make me happy is to be you. By the way, Cherry — we are going to move soon. Your mother and I have kept it from you for several days — but now I can tell you. We are moving tomorrow."

"Why, Mark?" Cherry asked wonderingly.

He frowned, then told her, "It's on account of that Margarette — that's why. She has had a dozen fits before her mother, trying to make her throw us out. Her mother,

poor thing, has stood it just as long as she could. Finally, she told your mother and me that we would just have to move — she means well, but, after all, Margarette is her daughter, and her happiness comes first."

Cherry thought, saying nothing. She remembered that Margarette hadn't even come in to see how she was getting along or visit her for a long time. She didn't need to ask the reason — Margarette was jealous and angry.

"Where are we going?" she asked at length.

"I think we are moving to Mrs. Tanby's. Your mother has gone to her house now to see her about it," explained Mark.

"I believe I remember the Tanby house," mused Cherry. "It's not nearly as fine as Mrs. Lynn's, is it?"

"The house is not nearly so fine. But perhaps a better, more congenial home," Mark said with feeling. "We'll all be happier there. I only wish I could have the rest of my life spent with you."

Cherry looked at him wonderingly. She knew he was in love with her, but many a time her thoughts went to Bill Walker — she wondered what had happened to him. If he were still alive — if they would ever get to see each other again and if they would ever be able to be married as they had planned.

"Oh, Mark, you wouldn't want to be with me always," she protested. "You'd soon tire of an invalid. That is what I may always be. Besides, Mamma and I plan to go back to the poor hills of North Alabama as soon as the war is over, and here — you would have a chance to enjoy society and gain a fortune, if only you would take it."

"Listen, Cherry," Mark said, a lump swelling up in his throat. "You are not leaving me here for a day. When

this war is over I am going back to North Alabama, to those hills just as soon as I can get there — only I hope to take you with me."

For some time Mark continued pushing her about the garden, and finally they returned to the house. As they neared it they met Mrs. Parker.

"Where have you been? I have been waiting for you for hours it seems," she said nervously.

"Oh, we have been in the garden," cried Cherry. "But I never thought that we had been gone for even an hour. Everything is so beautiful. And I am so happy that I can be out of the house again."

"We must hurry before it gets any cooler in the evening," Mrs. Parker urged. "I already have our things packed — we are going to Mrs. Tanby's place this very evening. Mark, can you roll her there in the chair?" Mark nodded. "Mrs. Tanby is waiting on the front porch with her maids to help us move our trunks," added Mrs. Parker.

Chapter XXIII

WILSON'S RAID THROUGH ALABAMA

During the winter of 1864, most of the Tories and mossbacks in the Alabama hills had been recruited into the Union Armies and were engaging in the campaigns with General Thomas and Sherman against Hood in Kentucky and Tennessee. The absence of most of the Tories from this section permitted the return and activities of the Rebel home-guards to be resumed. So it was, in the absence of the Tory men, these ruffians found it easy to rob and prey upon the wives and homes of the Tories who were away in the Yankee armies.

Ham Carpenter, who had left the country during the time when George Stout was there to safeguard the Tories and their families, had returned and was now the leader of the Rebel group. He and his men were staying most of the time in Fayette County, near the Hartsook Prison, from which they were raiding into Marion and Winston Counties.

Captain Garland Terrell had been sent by General Lyons from Columbus, Mississippi back to his home near Pikeville, to persuade the men who were deserting from Hood's forces to go back into the Confederate armies. In addition to Terrell's endeavor to persuade the deserting Confederates, he had also helped Carpenter in finding some of the Tories. They had raided several of the homes, taking all the people had and driving the women and children away into the cold.

"Thar's a whole passel uv them Tories in and around Helvingston's Toll Gate — we shore ought to get up thar an' kill a bunch uv them devils!" Ham told his group one day, on hearing of the Tories that had come back to their homes. His eyes gleamed maliciously.

"Less go an' git as many uv them as we kin!" Wiley Russell proposed, a cruel edge to his voice.

So the group started out from Hartsook Prison. The day was bitter cold. Snow and sleet fell on the men throughout most of the day. At length, when they reached Judge Terrell's place in Pikesville, they were so cold they stopped for the night to get warm and to rest.

"Where are you men headin' for, Ham?" Terrell asked, after inviting the group of seven men into his house for the night.

"We're on our way to see if we can't ketch a bunch uv these Tories ye got a'layin' out around here," Ham told him. "Do ye know who any uv them air what's around here?"

"Why, there ain't any right around here, I am sure," Terrell replied. "I hear that there is a good bunch of them slipping back to their homes around the 'Toll Gate.' If you go on up there, Doctor Mangrum can tell you who they are."

"Well, we shore want to get every one uv em that we can, fore Old Stout gits back in here and gits another bunch up em together."

They spent the night on pallets around the fireplace with Judge Terrell, and set out the next morning through the deep snow to get to the Toll Gate that day and find Doctor Mangrum. Dr. Mangrum had been on the examining board of Marion County and had left for a while in the time of the raids by Stout and his gang.

The day was already well spent when the group finally reached his home, where they were invited in and warmed themselves while waiting for the doctor's wife to get supper ready.

"We want ye to tell us where every Tory in the country is — we want to git em ever one fore Old Stout gits back here and we heard ye could tell us whar a passel uv em air," Ham told him.

"Well, now, let's see —" The doctor studied for a minute. "I'll tell ye a man that as like as not is home this very night and he is a Tory too, that's been in Old Stout's gang a time or two, so he ought to be killed, if I do say it myself. He's got no tellin' how many uv these Tories around here in the Yankee lines and he has brought no telling how many men back here to raid with Old Stout."

"Who is it, Doc?" Ham inquired excitedly.

"It's John Mitchell, over here. He don't live far from here," Mangrum said in a low tone, as if he were confiding a secret.

"I know of him — yep, he was with Old Stout's gang when he raided the Hartsook jail and killed Jim Mooney," Tobe Reed recalled.

"We'd better git him tonight if he is here, cause if any man's at home a night like this, he'll be in the house," Ham concluded shrewdly. "If we wait till tomorrow, he's liable to be gone back to them Yanks."

When supper was ready the men ate ravenously and fast in order to be on their way to Mitchell's house as soon as possible.

As they again went on their way, they found the snow frozen on top. The grinding, crashing sheet of ice be-

neath the tread of the seven men set up a hideous, monotonous racket as they went along.

"We couldn't slip up on nothing in this stuff," one of the men complained.

"We can't slip up nohow. We jest got to run up to the front door and back door uv his house fore he is spectin' us," Carpenter returned.

"Here's his tracks, men," one of the group announced suddenly, as he spied tracks made earlier in the day in the deep snow.

"He ain't thar, cause there ain't none goin' back in," concluded another as they came to the little house in the clearing on the hill.

The moon was already high in the sky. It sent glistening sparkles down over the snow, making a beautiful sight. The small house was quiet as the grave.

"Hello! Hello there!" Ham shouted as he came up onto the porch and banged with his fist on the plank door. Through the cracks of the logs he and the men could see a few glowing coals in the fireplace.

"Who is it?" a voice from within inquired apprehensively.

"Git up in thar and open this door or we'll bust the damned thing down!" Ham threatened.

A moment or two later and a ten or twelve year old boy opened the door a crack, just enough to peek out at the group of men.

"It's the home-guard men! Them home-guards!" he screamed and banged the door shut again.

"Lord, have mercy! Lord, have mercy!" Mitchell's wife screamed her heart out, and ran from the house at the back door with only her night-clothes on, not a shoe or sock on her feet. She was that panic-stricken. "Lord! Let me get away from them fiends!" She made poor time, her bare feet cracking through the hard, ice-encrusted snow.

"Come back here, woman!" one of the men shouted after her, but she only fought the harder to get away.

The boy had again opened the door and stood in the moonlight facing the home-guards.

"Men, ye oughtern' to a don' that!" he reprimanded bravely, tears pouring from his eyes.

"Who air ye?" Carpenter demanded gruffly.

"I'm Tom Nix, and that was my sister! She's scared to death. She'll just about die after this."

"Let her die. She ain't nothin' but a d—— Tory, nohow," a boisterous voice rang out as the men pushed their way into the house, stamping their cold feet on the floor.

"Whar's that John Mitchell who stays here, boy?" Wiley Russell asked the boy. The men were raking the coals of fire together, trying to start a blaze.

"He's gone back to the Yankee Army at Memphis. He ain't here. I wish he wuz here so he could get my sister and keep her from freezing," lamented the boy sadly.

"Put on some wood, men!" Bill Humphreys shouted.

"Is this all the wood ye got, boy?" another of the men asked disgustedly, pointing to the small pile of wood in one corner of the room.

"We ain't got another stick. We wuz aimin' to cut some more in the mornin'," the boy said, wiping a tear from his eye as he watched the men pile the wood on the fire.

"Where air ye goin', boy?" Wiley Russell asked the youngster as he saw the lad putting on his worn-out shoes and an extra coat that had both sleeves worn out at the elbow.

"I'm goin' to see about my sister, that's where," said the boy, heading out the back door after the woman who'd been scared away.

"Let's go, men!" Carpenter called from the front door.

"Let's wait till this fire is burnt out," objected another of the group.

A few minutes later as the fire began to burn low the men started out the door, heading for the home of another Tory they'd heard about who lived a few miles away. The snow was frozen even harder now; too hard to creak and break through when they walked on it.

As they started away the pitiful voice of the boy, partly up the hill a quarter of a mile away, was heard. "Oh, men, come here and help me, please," he cried. "I want to take my sister back to the house. She's dead here in the snow."

The men looked in his direction. "Let that Tory bitch lie thar!" spoke Ham Carpenter, and led his men on their way ruthlessly.

* * *

The young boy went back to the house and got one of the quilts from the bed and took it back and covered his sister's dead body. The next morning he went a mile in the snow to a neighbor's house to get help to take her to the house and bury her. They found that she had "miscarried" from the excitement and exposure. The fine baby boy, born there in the snow and ice, lay dead beside her.

The women dug a grave close to the house and buried the woman and her child.

"Won't you come and go to my home and live with me, Tom," one of the kindly neighbor women invited the boy after the funeral.

"No," the boy answered firmly, shaking his head and with a strange glow in his young eyes. "I am going to start for Memphis this very day and tell John what them

awful home-guard men have done. I hope he can come back and kill every one of 'em!"

* * *

The Parkers and Mark found life more pleasant with Mrs. Tanby. Mrs. Tanby's husband was in the cavalry and the last she had heard from him, he was in North Alabama.

Cherry was still not feeling too well, and her mother, too, was feeling depressed. One morning Mrs. Parker came and sat on the bed beside her daughter, tears pouring down her cheeks.

"Honey, I feel so sad," the older woman complained. "We have been here about a year now and have only heard from your Pappa once."

At first the girl's lips quivered as if she would cry, too. Then she took her mother's hand in both of hers and said comfortingly, "Don't worry, Mamma — everything will turn out all right in time. The weather has been so bad — but when it's clear and sunny and warm again, we'll all feel better — and Pappa will come back to us all in good time."

Her mother dried her tears and tried to seem more cheerful.

"We are lucky to have such a nice home here with Mrs. Tanby," Cherry said. "It may not be as magnificent, but I feel much more contented here. Mrs. Lynn was nice, but I always had the feeling there that Margarette resented our being there."

"That's right," her mother agreed. "Mark seems much more contented here, too. I'm glad of that."

"And before we know it, the war will be over — and we can all go back to our old home! Oh, that will be a wonderful day!" Cherry sighed as she thought of that wonder-

ful, oft wished-for day. "Here comes Mark now. I hope he has some good mail."

"Hello, there," Mark said, smilingly. "There wasn't any mail — but the people in town have received news that the awul battle for Nashville is over and — I am sorry to say, our troops have been defeated. They say that the power of our forces is broken and we may experience total defeat in a short time. But — at any rate then the war and all these terrible times will be over."

"Oh, my — Pappa was with Hood in that battle!" Cherry exclaimed tragically, clutching her hands to her breast.

"The Lord only knows what has become of him. I do wish we could hear." Mrs. Parker was fighting hard to hold back her sobs as tears filled her eyes.

After this the defeat of the Confederate forces at Nashville was the general topic at every meeting. The forts in South Alabama had already fallen. Dark clouds hung ominously over the South. Never before had the chances for the Confederacy looked so bleak and the defeat of the armies so certain.

But the winter was over — it had been a hard, long winter. March had come again. Everything again seemed beautiful in nature. The town of Montgomery was silently beautiful — silent except for the slow, solemn movements of the women and children. The arsenal works and factories were still trying to operate with the old men, women and young boys. Even these, though, were silent and still in comparison with the former years of the war.

As often as possible, Cherry and Mark were outside in the sun, which seemed to instill new life in the sick girl. Mark enjoyed pushing the girl about the garden in the wheel-chair.

"Mark," Cherry suggested one warm afternoon, "I believe I am well enough now to go to a certain place I've wanted to go for some time."

"Sure — where is it?" Mark asked wonderingly.

"I want to go to the jailhouse," Cherry pleaded. "Can you take me up the stairs after you've wheeled me there?"

Mark looked puzzled as to the girl's intentions. "Of course, if it is important that you go," he assured her. "We can leave your chair on the ground outside and you can use your crutches for a bit."

Without delay, he started for their destination, happy to note the joyous, expectant expression on the girl's face — and before long they had reached their destination.

"Who in the mischief do you want to see here, Cherry?" Mark asked as they waited for the jailer, an old man, to open the door.

He helped Cherry tenderly as she got on her crutches and hobbled up the stairs when the door had been opened. When they were in the hallway, Cherry turned and led the way to a room with which she seemed to be familiar.

"You'll see soon," she told him with a reassuring smile.

After a bit they came to a small-bared window, and saw through it a clean, well-groomed young man. His hair and beard were not long as they had been when Cherry had seen him before.

"Hello, Christopher!" exclaimed the girl. "I'm Cherry Parker. You remember, I came to see you once. And, Mr. Sheets, I want you to meet my friend, Mr. Mark McDowell."

"Howdy, Mr. McDowell," Chris said, smiling and bowing politely.

"Howdy," came from Mark in a strained voice. "So you are the man my father is being held hostage for."

There was silence for an embarrassing moment, then Chris spoke.

"Well, I have been told that there is a hostage being held for me," Chris said. "I am sorry if it is your father. Miss Parker, could you tell me how things are in the north part of the State? Do you hear from that section?"

"I have only heard through other refugees who have come here," she told him. "They have been very few. I don't know what it is like at our home in Winston County."

"Have you ever heard of Ida Gartman? Do you know what has become of her?" Chris asked next.

"No, no — I have never heard what has become of her. Her father, Mr. Tom was elected Judge of Winston County after Pink Curtis was killed."

"My goodness! Was Tom Pink Curtis killed?" This news seemed almost to break Chris Sheets down. He turned away from the window, almost in tears.

"Come on, let's go, Cherry." Mark began pulling Cherry's arm until she turned and went with him, after bidding Chris be of good cheer and farewell.

"And so that's Chris Sheets," Mark mused as they left. "I was expecting him to look altogether different than that."

"So was I, Mark, until I saw him. I was just like you — I had heard so many bad things about him until I wanted to see him for curiosity. He's a fine looking man, and has the kindest, most intelligent expression. I wish they would turn him out of jail."

"He is really a Tory, though," commented Mark, a tone of doubt in his voice about anyone caught with that stigma on him.

"Well, but what is wrong with that?" challenged Cherry.

"He's just like any other person so far as I can see," she said as Mark helped her down the stairway.

Mark looked at her a bit angrily. "You talk as though you were already in love with that man," he accused. "And I must confess, I don't like it."

"Silly," she defended herself. "You must be joking. I don't even know him — but I do sympathize with him for having to stay in jail so long, and — he is handsome."

* * *

When young Tom Nix finally reached Memphis and found his brother-in-law, John Mitchell, he told the sad story, and John was overcome with grief and anger. He insisted on taking the boy to tell the story all over again to General Soy, who was in charge of the forces at Memphis.

The General was aroused. "My God, Mitchell," he cried angrily after hearing the story, "such as that ought not to happen to hogs and cows, much less people! Get you a bunch of these men and go back and kill that Rebel and his gang of villains before they have time to murder any others!"

"I don't need a bunch from here, General," said Mitchell with a grim smile. "There is a big bunch uv men there that I know. The bunch that was with George Stout that'd help me if I was there to ask them."

"Well, you have my permission," the General granted. "Go now, and see how quick you can get back there and kill that Ham Carpenter and his whole bunch if you can find them."

"I'll find them — and I'll exterminate them!" promised John.

He and the boy started out for their home in Alabama without delay. They went by train from Memphis to

Corinth, Mississippi and the rest of the way on a horse Mitchell borrowed from a friend in Corinth.

After several days they finally reached Helvingston Toll Gate on the Military Highway, tired and worn. Now, without stopping or going by their home they went on toward the Hartsook Prison in Fayette County. John had learned from one of his acquaintances that a big group of Stout's men had banded together and were already on their way to catch Ham Carpenter or kill him. When they were only a few miles south of the Toll Gate, they met a large group of men on horses and mules.

"We'd better hide, eh?" the boy asked nervously, fearing they might be Rebel home-guards, but as he and John started for cover, John recognized some of the men, so held up.

"Don't worry, son," he told the boy, "they're friends!" He proceeded to hail the party, and they called back joyously on seeing him, guessing why he had returned.

"You're just in time, John," they said, "we've got the Reb you're lookin' for! We've got Old Ham right here," and they pointed to Carpenter, who was well-tied on a poor, skinny, sharp-backed horse. His hands were bound securely behind him and his feet tied saddle-geart fashion around the horse's belly. In addition, a big rope was already tied around his neck. The group had raided the Hartsook Prison and captured him.

"We wanted to bring him back near your place and keep him till ye could get back home, John," one of the group told him. "We wanted you to be the one to say how ye wanted him killed."

John rode forward and confronted the villain, but Ham Carpenter remained disdainful, sitting straight on his horse.

"We'll take that spunk outta you, you skunk!" John told him. "You killed my wife — and baby! Now you're going to get what's coming to you!"

"Where do ye say we take him, John? We'll take him anywhere ye say. Do ye want to take him back near your home?" Akers, one of the men, asked him.

"No, men — I don't want him to ever be near my house again. I don't want him to have that much pleasure. Let's take him over east of Toll Gate to 'White Rock' on the river. I hope we can leave him where he'll never be found. I want the buzzards and dogs to eat him up."

"That's where we'll take him then, men," Ed Flurry told the group and they rode on toward the bluff. When they neared the big rock they left their horses on the hill, except for the one Carpenter was on and went down a steep hollow behind the big 'White Rock,' from the river.

"Now, what do ye want us to do to him, John? Just tell us and we'll fix him any way ye say," one of the group proposed.

"I say we ought to do him like Old Stoke and his bunch did Henry Tucker," suggested another of the men.

Despite his efforts to remain calm and stoical, Ham Carpenter paled a bit at the remembrance of what had been done to Henry Tucker.

"No, I don't want to try to out-do old Stoke Roberts," Mitchell told them. "I'm plenty mad and I know Carpenter deserves the worst, but — we've got to remember we're still men and human beings — not inhuman fiends! I'll tell ye what I want ye to do, and that is, tie the rope around his feet and hang him up with his head down."

One of the men cut the rope underneath the horse's belly and another held the big rope around Ham's neck

and jerked him off the horse onto his face. The prisoner gritted his teeth and did not say a word or even groan.

The men then looped another rope around his ankles and threw the end of it over the limb of a tree.

"Now, what do ye say we do to him, John?" one of them asked as they drew the prisoner off the ground.

"Pull him a little higher!" Mitchell ordered. "Old Ham drove my dear wife away from our home in the snow, when he had failed to find me, and the poor thing froze to death. Now I want to make it as hot for him as he made it cold for her. I want you men to cut a bunch of them green pine bushes and bring them here."

The men went to cutting the small pines in the hollow and piling them beside the tree.

"Now rake up those dry leaves under him and set them afire, and when the leaves are burning good, pile on the green pine tops," instructed John.

"Here, I want to strike the fire that sets them off," Ed Flurry now requested, coming forward with a flint and steel rod. He poured a good bit of powder on the leaves and began to strike his flint nearby. Before long the powder flashed and the leaves began to crackle with flame. When they began to blaze good the men began to pile the green pine tops on.

"Now watch him squirm, the old devil!" Flurry said.

But Ham Carpenter closed his eyes and accepted the doom without another bit of struggle. When the smoke began to smother him, enveloping his huge form, he coughed a few times and sneezed violently. His repeated sneezes seemed as though they would jerk his body asunder. As the men saw the fire die under him they lowered his head a little nearer the coals and tied the end of the rope to the trunk of the tree and left him hanging. It was

about over — Ham Carpenter would ride on no more fiendish, terror rides on earth.

"Is there anybody else you want us to help you get?" Flurry asked John Mitchell as they walked away.

"Yes," John told him grimly. "There's old Doctor Mangrum — I heard he's the one who sent Old Ham and his bunch of killers to my house."

"How do you want us to kill him, John?" another of the men asked.

"I want to kill him myself," John insisted. "I want you to get someone to go and get Old Doc to go to see somebody. And I want one or two of ye men to stay with me and when he goes to see the patient, we'll get him!"

The men nodded in approval of the idea.

"Good," approved Mardy Akers. "That old devil ought to of been killed a long time ago."

"We'll get him word to go and see old man Joe How," Flurry suggested. "He lives south uv the river from the toll gate and you can be hid near the ford and when he comes along, ye can get him."

"Fine," agreed Mitchell.

"When do ye want to get him to go?" asked another.

"Just as soon as ye can," Mitchell told them. "I don't aim to eat a bite till I've killed him."

The men lost no time in sending the doctor word, as Mitchell and Flurry and one other went to the Military Ford on Buttachatchee River to await the doctor's coming.

The three waited for a long time for Mangrum to come along and were growing impatient as the hour was growing late.

"I don't believe the old Doc is going to come," Flurry

said disappointedly. "Maybe we'd better go and try to get him some other time, eh?"

"No," insisted John Mitchell, "I want to wait right here, cause the old Doc knows that Old Man How is bad off and so the Doc will be sure to come. We shouldn't have to wait much longer."

He was right. Before another ten minutes had elapsed the three heard the sound of the doctor's horse coming down the hill across the river.

"Yonder he comes now," Flurry cried softly as he turned to his companions.

As the doctor rode across the river, John Mitchell suddenly stepped out and confronted him.

"Hands up, Doc! And don't move or I'll blow your head off!" John snapped, levelling his weapon on the other.

The doctor was caught completely off-guard. He jerked his head and hands up as if he had been asleep. "Good Lord!" he gasped on seeing who it was. "What do you want with me?" He was trembling with fright.

"Get down off that hoss, Doc," Mitchell ordered, jabbing his gun in the other's ribs.

"Good Lord, John, what do you mean?" cried the doctor, dismounting from his horse.

"I just mean one thing, Doc," Mitchell rasped angrily, "you tipped off Ham Carpenter to get me — and so caused the death of my wife. Now I'm back and I mean to do one thing sure — that is to kill you!"

"God, don't, John!" pleaded the doctor. "I didn't mean it — they made me tell! Oh, God, have mercy! Oh, Lord, have mercy!"

John shook his head. He aimed his gun. One shot

rang out from his pistol and the body of the doctor slumped to the ground.

John turned grimly away. "All right, let's go, men! I'll get his hoss," he said. "I'll need one to ride back to Corinth. And now, men, now that I'll have to be going back to the war-front, I want you to promise me to take good care of the boy that was with me — till I get back."

They promised, and John, feeling satisfied with the achievements so far, mounted on the dead doctor's horse, headed back in the direction of his regiment.

* * *

After the battle of Nashville in 1864, Van Dorn made a raid south of the Tennessee River through Franklin, Winston, and Marion Counties cleaning everything as he went. The people of these counties who had members of their families in the Yankee armies were compelled to flee.

Mahala Phillips took her children and hid in the woods until the army had passed and they then bought a yoke of oxen and started for Decatur.

Mary Roberts, who had stayed with Phillips' family during the war had gone home to her mother and they had gone to Tennessee. Several months later Mary found where Phillips' wife and children were and came to live with them again.

* * *

Near the end of March, 1865, the people of Montgomery received the news that General J. H. Wilson, under General Thomas, had spent some two or three months preparing a raid through central Alabama to destroy the iron foundries and capture Tuscaloosa, Selma, and Montgomery. This news was received with a great deal of

alarm. It seemed that consternation had seized many of the people. Others began to rally and prepare for the defense of their cities. It was agreed that all men, both young and old, whether in uniform or not, when alerted, would come to the defense of the city that was being attacked.

One day Mark McDowell came running into the Tanby home excitedly. He had been called for service and advised to be ready at any time for defense emergencies.

"Where is Cherry?" he asked Mrs. Parker, looking about frantically for the girl.

"I don't know," Mrs. Parker told him. "I saw her walking through the house on her crutches awhile ago. She must be somewhere near."

Mark continued looking for the girl, calling her name and finally he discovered her in the apple orchard, and dashed to her as quickly as he could.

"Cherry, dear," he cried excitedly, "I have something that I just must talk to you about."

And then he paused, noticing that the girl didn't have her crutches.

"Cherry," he chided, "where are your crutches?" He could see that she was standing alone, holding only lightly to the tree limb to help support her weight a bit off her injured leg.

"Oh, I can walk alone now — Mark!" she told him proudly. "Without my crutches, too — except my leg is mighty tired." She tried to take a demonstrative step on her foot now to show him, but winced with pain and slumped down. "I believe you will have to hand me my crutches after all, Mark," she said. "They are yonder beside that big tree." She pointed them out to him.

He sank down beside her. "But, Cherry, there is some-

thing that is so very important that I must tell you first — after that I will get your crutches for you," he said.

"What is it Mark?" she asked in alarm.

"Cherry," he said solemnly, "I may have to leave you, at any time."

"Oh, no — why?" She cried, suddenly disconcerted.

"I'll have to go into service to help defend our city. Either Selma or Montgomery is likely to be attacked by Wilson's army at any time. I have already been alerted. Cherry, I want you to tell me — I want to tell you, that I love you. I want you to give me your promise, that you'll be — mine." He took her hand and pressed it tenderly.

"But, Mark," she said surprised, "why do you ask me this, when you are just about to go into service? What if you are captured, or killed?"

"Dear," his eyes were pleading, "I could go — I could do anything if I had your promise, that you love me — that you'd be mine. Will you, sweetheart, will you promise that you love me and that you will wait for me till I come back?" he begged, his lips quivering with emotion.

Cherry studied him for a time, then asked, "You aren't afraid, are you, Mark?"

"Afraid? No, I'm not afraid," he protested vigorously. "I am glad to go to fight in defense of our homes and cities. But, my concern is, Cherry — that I love you, want you to promise me that you'll wait for me till I return — and marry me then."

Cherry turned her head aside, thinking of Bill Walker and her promise to him — her love for him. But it was a long time since they had been together — perhaps Bill was dead a long time and would never return. She had

been in Mark's company for a long time now — and he was nice. But — was she in love with him?

"Couldn't we talk about that, Mark, when you get back?" she asked. "I will still be here, unless we are captured or killed."

"But, won't you tell me now, Cherry? Promise me?" he coaxed, slipping his arm about her waist.

"I don't see that it would do any good — now," she told him. "Our futures are so uncertain."

"Cherry, it would mean everything to me," he told her solemnly. "I'd have so much more to look forward to. So much more to fight for. So much to hope for, to come back to — won't you give me your promise, dear?"

Cherry dropped her head. Mark was holding her close. She thought long, fighting a mighty battle within herself.

"Won't you tell me, sweetheart?" he urged. At length she raised her eyes to his.

"Mark, I — I think I love you," she said. "But right now — I don't want to promise too much, in case I should disappoint you. Please wait until you come back — when all these horrors and uncertainties — of war are ended."

"Why wait? Cherry, I don't understand," he said, puzzled. "If you care for me, truly — why can't you tell me now? Tell me — what do you mean?"

"Mark, I can't tell you now — but there is a reason," she told him.

"A reason, what is it? I must know," he insisted. "Tell me at once."

"Oh, this is such a vivid reminder. I had almost forgotten," she said, seeming to be talking to herself.

"Reminder?" Mark shook her gently. "A reminder of what?"

"Please don't ask me again, Mark," she begged. "I might already have said yes, if it had not called to me so vividly the —" she bowed her head low.

"You mean a promise? Cherry — it can't be you have already promised you'd —"

"Please stop, Mark. I will give you my — kiss, though, now." She raised her lips to his. "There, now, Mark, you go — I will see you when you come back."

Mark held her tenderly. Tears were blinding his eyes. Finally he turned and got her crutches and handed them to her.

"Good-bye, Cherry, sweetheart. I must go now, but let us both pray we will see each other again and enjoy happiness together," he said, and strode rapidly across the orchard and to the street.

Cherry could not answer. She braced herself with her crutches and started slowly, painfully, toward the house.

* * *

Wilson's army had met no opposition until it reached Walker County. There Dr. L. C. Miller, with a group of home-guards were way-laying them at the road near Holly Grove, and as Wilson's scouts came riding along, the home-guards fired into them, killing three of them and causing the others to flee the way they had come.

Miller and his group scurried back to Jasper to warn the people of the coming of the Yankee Army, running from house to house, screaming at the people to leave their homes till the Yankees had passed through.

Shortly after the Yankees arrived in the town — and then went on, burning the courthouse and Methodist Church.

At the Jefferson County line, Wilson sent Croxton to-

ward Tuscaloosa, while he turned toward Elyton and the iron works at Red Mountain. He continued on through Central Alabama, capturing every town he came to, then turning prisoners loose.

He reached Selma with nine thousand men, on the afternoon of April 2nd. Here he was opposed by three thousand men — most of whom were old men and raw recruits spread over a line three miles long. Wilson's men broke through their lines within a half an hour after the attack started and most of the men had to surrender. A few escaped into the darkness with Generals Forrest, Armstrong, Roddy and Adams. Those captured were stripped of arms and ammunitions and turned loose to go to their homes.

On April 4th, General Croxton, with his brigade, came to the Bridge across the Warrior River at Tuscaloosa, where he was met by three hundred of the Cadets Corps. When L. C. Garland, President of the University, saw the strength of the Yankees, he ordered their retreat and the Federals came into the city and burned all military supplies and factories including the University.

The next eight days were spent by Wilson and his men burning and destroying everything valuable to the Confederacy. Then they crossed the Alabama River on April the tenth and set out for Montgomery. The Mayor of Montgomery surrendered the city to them unopposed on April 12th. By this time news had reached the people that Lee had surrendered to Grant on April 9th, and the war was almost over.

* * *

"Say, General," Doc Ingle, who had joined the Yankees some two years before, said, addressing his superior, in

Montgomery, "we've got a man here in this town that we've got to see about. I want us to search the jail and every house in this place to find him — and if we can't find him, I want to help burn every house in the town."

"Who is it?" inquired the General.

"Chris Sheets, from our good old Winston County," the other told him.

"Get yourself a group of men and go for him this very minute," Wilson ordered. Arrest the jailer, if he hasn't already turned him out, and bring the jailer to me."

Ingle got busy in a hurry, calling a group of his acquaintances in the army together and they set out for the jail.

"I said we'd get Chris Sheets out of that jail, and we'll do it," Doc declared confidently.

But the men were cheated out of having a good fight by which to take Chris Sheets out of jail. When still a short distance from the jail they saw Sheets issue forth and come walking toward them.

"By God, yonder he come now!" Doc shouted and broke in a run toward the former prisoner.

It was evident that Chris had recognized Ingle at the same time, for he, too, broke into a run toward him. A moment later and the two grabbed and hugged each other in joyous embrace. Tears were streaming down the cheeks of both. For a time neither was able to speak. Then they at length broke their hold of each other and Ingle stepped back a step or two and cried, "Chris, it's over! It's over! We've won, we've won!"

"You mean the war is all over? Have the Yanks actually captured this town? I didn't even hear a shot," Chris returned. He could hardly believe the news.

"Sure, it's over," the other gestured jubilantly. "Oh, there may be a few garrisons holding out yet, but the most of it is over. Didn't the jailer tell you about it?"

"No," replied Sheets, looking back toward the jail. "I guess he felt too bad about it to tell anything. Just said he had orders to turn me loose."

"Has he been good to you, Chris? Have these devils treated you right while you've been in this jail? Tell us if they haven't; we'll string them up and blow their brains out," Ingle promised fully in dead earnest.

"The old man, the jailer, has been mighty good and kind to me. Besides, he wasn't to blame for them putting me there," said Chris. "Them Rebel politicians, Old Yancey, Brooks, and Russell, are the ones that ought to have been killed. Old Yancey is already dead. I heard about that, and maybe I won't ever meet the rest of them."

Ingle and his group led Sheets back to the Yankee headquarters amidst happy shouts and the applause of victory.

"I plan to go back to Winston County just as soon as I can get there," came the young man's ready reply.

"You mean you haven't learned to like Montgomery in three years?" someone else asked him jokingly.

"Well, I guess, fellows," he replied in good spirit, "I guess I've just not seen enough of it here lately. Maybe I have been staying in a bit too closely." He scratched his head. "Say, by golly, there is a kid, a rebel, somewhere here in this town that I'd darn well love to see. She's been to the jail a couple of times. I may look around for her a bit before I head back to Winston — I'd like to capture her and take her back with me, if I can find her!"

Although the Confederates were largely defeated every-

where the military district had not yet been surrendered. After the Yanks had destroyed everything of value to the Confederacy in Montgomery they started east through the country toward Columbus, Georgia.

Chris Sheets was given an escort of acquaintances and started for his home in Winston County.

Chapter XXIV

A HERO COMES HOME

The war was rapidly coming to a close. On May 4th, 1865, General Dick Taylor surrendered the Confederate forces of his Department of Alabama, Mississippi and East Louisiana to the Northern officials and thus ended the war in Alabama. The troops were released at various places wherever they chanced to be and the captured Confederates were paroled to go to their homes once more. Many of the Rebel soldiers were already freed except for parole observation and occupational duties. Many of the veterans of Lee and Johnston's armies began arriving, dirty, tired and badly in need of shaves and haircuts. Some of these men had walked hundreds of miles to get home, only to find new heartbreaks awaiting them — their houses destroyed or rotted down and their fences burned, their fields grown up in briars. Many of them were compelled to spend weeks and months searching before they again found their families who had hidden away in other parts of the country, before they could start themselves and their families in life anew.

The maliciousness of the home-guards was not to be forgotten or forgiven so easily, and now that the South had lost and the war was about over, the families of the home-guards who had not already gone, were compelled to leave the county, to move to other and new settlements where they were not known.

The call of home is ever strong. Mrs. Parker and Mrs.

Andrew Kaiser were both trying to get passage back to Winston County and their old homes — though Mrs. Kaiser would have to rebuild, or live with friends. They had just returned from the stage coach station in town and were sitting on the porch of Mrs. Tanby's home, talking.

"Oh, it does seem so long that we will have to wait before we can go back," Mrs. Kaiser said sadly. "I miss my old place so."

"Undoubtedly the soldiers will all be gone from this section in a little while and we will be able to take a carriage or train back as far as Tuscaloosa. And I'd be glad to walk on from there, if necessary, in order to get back," Mrs. Parker said hopefully. "Sometimes, though, I feel so distressed when I think of the conditions we are most likely to find when we get back, that I have a horror of returning."

"I hope that them Tories will be gone and that we can live in peace without fear of reprisals," Mrs. Kaiser commented. "Now, I really must go." She rose and turned about, and landed almost in the arms of Mark McDowell, who had just come up. "Mark!" she gasped in surprise.

"Mrs. Kaiser, and Mrs. Parker!" cried the youth, holding both arms wide to catch them in his embrace.

"Oh, Mark, it is so good to see you!" Mrs. Parker cried, as she rose from her seat to grab him.

"Mark, we had wondered what had become of you — we feared perhaps you had been killed or wounded at Selma," Mrs. Parker explained. She patted him on the shoulder lovingly.

"Got through it all safely," he told them. "Where is Cherry?" He sounded very anxious and turned to look about him expectantly.

"She has gone to town again — perhaps to the jail. I heard her say that she wished she could find Chris Sheets, if he is still here," Mrs. Parker informed him.

Mark frowned darkly. He turned in exasperation. "Chris Sheets!" he said sourly. "Well, I'll run along now and try to find her. I'm afraid little good it will do me, though — she's in love with that Tory, I just know it! I hope he's already gone and that she can't find him."

Mark was scarcely out of sight of the house, however, and Mrs. Kaiser gone to her place where she was staying, when Cherry came along another street and entered the house by the rear door.

At first Mrs. Parker thought it was their hostess, then saw to her surprise it was Cherry, her own daughter.

"Oh, Cherry, you can't guess who was just here!" she cried. "Mark came back!"

Cherry smiled happily. "Oh, good!" she exclaimed. "I am glad he's back — that he wasn't killed or injured — he wasn't, was he? Where is he now?" But though she showed interest in Mark's return, it was not the overly excited interest a girl should show for the return of a lover.

"He's looking for you now, Cherry," Mrs. Parker said, "I told him I thought you'd gone down to the jail to see Chris Sheets — and he seemed powerfully upset over it."

Cherry frowned. "Oh, I like Mark," she said, "but I do hope we can leave soon for Winston County — and I hope that Mark doesn't try to make love to me any more."

"Why, Cherry," cried her mother, astonished, "I thought you had been in love with Mark for a long time. He has been so kind and attentive and patient with you when your leg was broken. You accepted his help and

kindness — seemed so nice with him. Why, it would look like sheer deception to him now, if you failed to continue to show your gratefulness."

"But, Mamma, I am not — not in love with him —" The girl broke off her statement without finishing and picked up a newspaper to read an article telling of the end of the war and the people hurrying to get back to their homes.

A short time later hurrying footsteps sounded on the porch and Mark burst in. His eyes lighted up when he saw Cherry and he came to her, arms opened to take her into his embrace. "Cherry, darling!"

"Oh, hello, Mark," she said rather casually and avoided his embrace and merely took his hand.

"Cherry," he cried disappointedly, "what do you mean? Aren't you glad to —?"

"Of course I am real glad to see you, Mark. I am awfully glad you are back, safe. Now we can go back to Winston."

"But, Cherry, why do you disappoint me?" he asked. "I thought you would be waiting for me, to be mine when —" He came toward her again but she slipped behind the chair in which she had been sitting to avoid him.

"Now, Mark," she said with a forced smile, "You know I only asked you to wait."

"Cherry, honey — I love you so much. I have thought of you so often and lived for this day when I could be with you again. Won't you —" He was still reaching for her.

"Mark," she said slowly, changing the subject, "I wonder if you would do something for me?"

"Cherry, I'd do anything in the world for you — what is it you want, dear?" His eyes were eloquent.

"I wonder if you would go with me to see when we will be able to go by stagecoach back to our home in Winston County?"

"I'd be glad to," Mark agreed.

Cherry and her mother were both very anxious to get back and even had most of their things packed in readiness for the trip as soon as it could be arranged.

"Cherry," Mark said appealingly, as he and the girl walked along the street, "you seem to be terribly anxious to get on your way back to Winston County. Why? Why can't you show some pleasure in having me back with you? We've been together so much — and you know I have learned to care for you. Without you my life will be empty — why couldn't you have learned to love me, too?"

"Oh, it's only natural for Mamma and me to want to get back home," replied the girl, ignoring part of his question. "We had already decided that we would not stay a day longer after the war ended, than we had to. So we naturally want to leave at our very first chance. You are going with us, aren't you, Mark? Aren't you anxious to get back to North Alabama, too?"

"Certainly, I'm anxious to get back — and mainly because then I'll be with you. You're so cold to me. I suppose you're anxious to get back so you can see and be with Chris Sheets," he ended in a jealous tone.

"Oh, nonsense," the girl protested. "I hadn't even thought of him — but he's no longer here. He was freed. It could be that he'll be there when we get back. Do you think so, Mark?"

He didn't answer that one.

They had now arrived at the stagecoach stop, where they could inquire about the prospects for the trip back North.

* * *

Chris Sheets had come back home, but it was a sad home-coming for him, for neither his mother or father were there any longer. Both had died the year before.

Chris was very popular, considered something of a martyr. All his old friends and hosts of new ones kept coming to visit him in droves, to welcome him back and to congratulate him for his faithfulness to the cause he had so gallantly championed.

"God bless ye, Chris, we sure air proud uv ye an' glad ye got beck safely," Jiles Addison exclaimed, shaking Chris by the hand when they met again.

"We shore are, Chris; we love ye like a brother," Andy Ingle declared, embracing Chris.

Tears flowed freely from the eyes of all three.

"Chris, we want ye to come to Houston the Fourth of July and make us another speech," declared Jiles. "We recollect the ones ye ust to make thar fore them Rebs got a hold uv ye." His eyes glowed with warm remembrance.

"I'm sure glad to be back and to meet all my old friends again," Chris declared with warmth. "And, I'll tell you, men — there's nothing I'd love better than to see my old friends and greet them and talk with them. And that is what I plan to do for a long time. But I won't come to Houston for a public meeting. The war is over now, and General Wilson and Grant and the others have asked us to forget it if we can instead of talking about it. We have finally won and that's the big thing we wanted, when we could no longer stay out of it, so now, to talk of our hardships and ill-treatment would only prolong the bad feelings among our people. So it would be best, wisest, to forget it and all try to get along together the best we can."

"Yes, reckon that's right, Chris," Ingle agreed, slapping

him on the shoulder. "Anyway, ye are a hero, Chris, a real hero. Thar ain't annothin' in the world that's too good for ye. And ye can have anything we've got that ye want. And we are mighty proud to see ye back."

Chris had intended to make his home once more in the humble log house left vacant by the passing of his Ma and Pa. But he was not able to do this because all the neighbors and friends kept insisting that he come to visit and to live with them at their houses and he could not very well turn them down without hurting their feelings.

Tom Gartman and Jonathan Barton went to his home early one sunshiny day near the first of June.

"Hello, Chris," Gartman called as they rode up.

"Good morning, men," Chris returned, coming to the door. "Get down from your horses and come in."

"We've not time to visit, Chris," Barton informed him. "Just a matter of business this time. We have word from Decatur that you are invited to come there at once, or come to Washington, if you will."

Chris frowned, thinking it over. "All right, I will try to get up to Decatur as soon as I can," he agreed. "Wonder what the call is about? You know?"

"We don't know, but I reckon it's something about work with the government," explained Barton.

"Well, if it has to do with work here in Winston County, or North Alabama, I don't want it at all," stated Chris emphatically. "If it is work somewhere else, I might take it. Say, Mr. Gartman, I want to ask you a question. I have already inquired and have received only rumors — I'd like to ask you whatever became of your daughter, Ida? I've heard that she went to Decatur to nurse in a Yankee Hospital."

"That's right," agreed Gartman. "She went in the Fall of '64 to work in the hospital at Decatur and in a while, she went on to Huntsville to work in another hospital there — and then, it wasn't long until she fell in love with a young doctor, Burrows, from Kentucky, and they married. They've not been back since and I don't know when they will ever come back."

Chris said nothing for a time, but a sad expression and a hurt look spread over his face. He had cared a good deal for Ida and she for him — but the war had torn them apart, as it had many others in its ruthlessness.

"You'll be going to Decatur soon then, will you, Chris?" Barton asked, changing the subject, as he and Mr. Gartman mounted their horses preparatory to riding away.

"Maybe," returned Sheets, almost indifferently, and he turned and walked slowly, with a dejected mien back into his tumble-down log shack and seated himself in one of the home-made straight-backed chairs.

"So that is the truth about Ida, eh?" he said aloud to himself. "She did go to Decatur, just as I had heard. Then on to Huntsville — and is now married, to a doctor — married! Lost to me forever!" He cupped his chin in his palms. "Ida, she was beautiful, refined — she wanted a home — the right to a man's love, children! I hope she is happy with him, as long as I couldn't be the one to make her happy."

He sat silent for a long time, thinking, staring into the big, empty rock fireplace.

One memory came vividly to him. He recalled the time he had seen his Pa — that was when he left five years before to go to Houston. It was the picture of his Pa building the fire in the big rock fireplace on Saturday morn-

ing, November 10th, 1860 — the day he went so eagerly to Houston to see who had been elected president.

* * *

Luck had been with them — the time for coming back home had arrived at last, now that the horrors of war were ended.

Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Kaiser, Cherry and Mark were in the carriage with Sam Noles. Mr. Noles had met them at Larissa Postoffice on the Byles Road and was carrying them back to Brown Creek Bottom. They had sent him word by the stagecoach man that previous week to come for them on his next trip.

"What is the news, Mr. Noles?" Mrs. Parker asked their driver as they were on their way. "What have you heard from the people in Brown Creek? Are any of them back yet?"

There was a long silence before Noles spoke. He was reluctant to tell them the bad news, but he knew it would have to be told eventually.

After swallowing hard, he shifted the reins in his hand and replied, "I reckon you've already heard about your husband, Judge Parker, haven't you?"

"No," Mrs. Parker said, a cold hand seeming to clutch at her heart. "Quick, tell me — what have you heard? Is he still alive?"

Noles turned again to shift the reins. His face was pale as a sheet. "No, no — I shore hate badly to have to tell you this, Mrs. Parker, but he is no longer alive. Howard Bates came back from the camp last week. He was with your husband in Hood's army in the battle of Nashville last December. Bates told me that he was in the field hospital when they brought the Judge in — sick with pneu-

monia, and since he was convalescing, he was assigned to care for your husband, and he waited on him until he died. They were getting ready to evacuate the dead, sick and wounded from Shelbyville when Hood's forces were broken and had to retreat. They barely had time to bury the Judge just outside of Shelbyville before the Yankees came in. So he still rests there."

"Oh, oh!" gasped Mrs. Parker, and Cherry, too, gasped, and then both burst into tears. Mrs. Kaiser and Mark had all they could do to console the poor women.

"Oh, my poor husband!" wept Mrs. Parker, "He was so interested in helping as much as he could — and he looked forward so, to when it would all be over and we could be back in our home again, together, happy!"

The remainder of the trip was made rather silently, though Mark and Mr. Noles tried to talk on more cheerful subjects to get the minds of the women off their grief.

Finally the wheels of the heavy carriage came to a stop on the jutting rocks of the once well-kept road, and they all looked for the familiar gate of a few years before, but looked in vain. It was torn from its hinges. A couple of panels of the yard fence were flat on the ground and part of the palings were gone. Weeds and grass were growing rankly in the yard.

"Where is Sincy?" Cherry called as they climbed from the carriage. She ran to the porch, and found the steps propped with a huge rock and a section of the porch floor had fallen several inches.

"Sincy! Oh, Sincy!" Cherry called loudly.

"Yes, Mom! Honey Chile!" Sincy came flying through the hall to greet her. "I sho knows dat call!" She grabbed Cherry into her arms and the two locked themselves to-

gether for several minutes in a happy reunion. "Oh, honey, I sho love yo Chile! I is so proud ma honey chile is back!" Sincy kept on crying and hugging Cherry. Then she grabbed hold of Mrs. Parker with one hand as Mrs. Parker came into the house.

"Where are the other darkies, Sincy?" Mrs. Parker inquired of her.

"Da ain't none heah, but Mammy Mandy and Ol Zeke and Liz an Ol Stacia," Sincy said, still hugging Cherry She was dirty and her clothes were in rags.

Mandy came peeping around the door in the hallway now, trying to see who it was at the house. She had run to the quarters when she heard the carriage coming up and was afraid to come back in the house till she was sure of those present.

"Lor, if'n it hain' Ma dea Missus! Lor, I is so proud to see you'!" she cried and came rushing in to hug Mrs. Parker and Cherry. "Whoop! Lor, I is so happy!" She clapped her hands in shouting glee. Tears were flowing freely from their eyes.

"We want to see the house and things around here, and see how bad things are — and what we can do to fix them again as they were," Cherry declared, and started through the hall. Mrs. Parker was helping Mark with their trunks. Sincy ran on to Cherry's room, holding her hands out to the girl in a display of leading her along the way.

"Gee, Sincy, the old house sure looks natural, don't it?" cried Cherry. "My, I love this old place!" Cherry looked with adoring eyes on the walls, stairs, ceilings, and everything about her in the house. "Oh, Sincy!" She was almost overwhelmed when they came to her room. "Sincy, you have all my things here yet!"

Sincy proudly waved her arms. "Dey don eber one

heah, honey! I don knows, cose I don fix em eber day."

Cherry began picking up the China pieces off the mantle and examining them closely as though they were each one a new priceless possession. "Sincy, I am so proud you have kept them for me. You certainly are a dear."

"Yessum, Miss Cherry. I knowed ma honey chile be back. I promise ya I'd keep care ob your things while yo gone."

As Cherry and Sincy went on through the house they saw Old Zeke and Liz and Stacia peeping in through the back kitchen door. Their big white eyes were never spread wider in all their lives.

"Hello, Stacia and Zeke and Liz!" Cherry greeted them with a big wave of her hand.

"Um, Uum!" moaned Stacia. "Sho nuf hits Miss Cherry!" A wide grin swept over her face.

"Lor, Lor!" Liz was holding close to Zeke. "I don ready to gib up de ghost. I don ready to go to ma Lor!"

"Wha our Massa an wha am Mistress?" Zeke wanted to know.

"Mistress is here, in the house. Massa won't be back," Cherry told them, a sob in her throat.

"Lor, Lor!" moaned Stacia again.

They were waiting, old and feeble now, for Mrs. Parker to come into the kitchen. They felt too humble to pass beyond the threshold of the kitchen door. The three stood abreast in front of the kitchen door awaiting her entrance into the big house so that they might see her.

"Oh, Lor, I is so happy!" Liz shouted and slapped Zeke on the shoulders. "Dar she is! Dar Ma Missus sho is! I is so proud!"

"Um! Uum!" Stacia rolled her big eyes as she wrung her hands in childish glee.

Mandy escorted her mistress into the room. Zeke was too elated to speak. He simply stood with his mouth dropped way down and a big smile played over his whiskered face.

For some time Mrs. Parker and Cherry enjoyed themselves going over the place, looking about all the rooms. Mrs. Kaiser sat in the big arm-chair which she had used when staying with the family a couple of years before. She brushed a tear from her eye every now and then. For her own home had been destroyed and her husband murdered — still, it saddened her.

Mark went upstairs after bringing in the trunks and went to the room where he had spent a few nights before leaving this home with the girl he loved and her mother as refugees.

"By golly," he mused, "I just hope we don't have any more of that Old Stout to be worried about, now that the war is over." He shoved the sagging window lattice open and looked out of the high window down to the ground, and thought of the time he had leaped from it and run from the home-guards, thinking they were after him. "It's sure a wonder that jump didn't kill me," he declared. "Maybe it would have, if I hadn't been so badly scared."

After a time Mrs. Parker returned to the living room, where she found Mrs. Kaiser weeping bitterly. "Oh, bless her poor sweet soul," she said, running to the side of her weeping guest and throwing her arm about her comfortingly. "Mrs. Kaiser, I am so sorry to have run into the house in such fashion and been so thoughtless and negligent of you."

"Oh, dear Mrs. Parker, it is not neglect," the old woman replied. "You have been very kind and gracious to me.

It's just the thought of having come back home — till we had reached your place here, where you are so happy — and I realized that I have no place to go. Perhaps the little hut I lived in after our house was burnt is already toppled down and I won't be able to build another." She began weeping more copiously than ever.

"Don't you ever worry about a home, Mrs. Kaiser, as long as I have this," Mrs. Parker assured her. "You shall stay right here and make your home with us."

* * *

As Mark looked out of the window of his room, he saw Cherry and Sincy coming in through the back hall door, from the quarters. Immediately, he went down the stairway and was able to meet Cherry in the hallway.

"Cherry, you are very happy to be back in your old home again, aren't you?" he observed, as the two walked into the parlor together.

"It's wonderful being back!" the girl cried, clasping her hands to her breast in childish joy. "You will be happy, too, when you get back to your home in Decatur, won't you, Mark?"

"Cherry," he said, looking directly into her beautiful blue eyes, and reaching out to take her hand tenderly. "I haven't even thought of going on home — yet. I may go on later — but now — I want to stay here, with you, to help you and your Mamma get straightened out. And, Cherry," he swallowed hard, "I want to —" And then he saw that Cherry was crying. "What is it, Cherry, dear?" he asked tenderly.

She turned and stared out the window. For a full moment she gazed in pensive anguish toward the big pine tree beside the rail fence. Then she whipped both her hands over her eyes and slumped down into a chair.

Mark went to her and stopped beside her, trying in vain to soothe her sorrow. "What on earth is it, Cherry? What is the trouble? Please tell me," he begged.

Cherry was too overcome with her emotions to answer a word, however, and pushed his hand off her shoulder. Her entire body quivered with tremors as she sobbed as though her heart would break.

"Cherry," persisted Mark, "what is it? You are acting so strangely! Tell me quickly, I must know!" His voice was demanding.

"Oh, Mark, I can't tell you. You'll never know how terrible I felt when I saw that big tree beside the fence yonder." She looked as she pointed her finger toward it. "Oh!" she screamed again.

"Come, dear!" Mark caught her under her arms and lifted her from the chair and led her into another room.

Cherry was fairly recovered and herself again when she and Mark came into the presence of her mother and Mrs. Kaiser.

A bit later Mark went out into the yard and paused to study the tree by the fence.

"Pshaw, there's nothing about this thing or the fence, either, that I can see to upset Cherry," he scoffed. "Oh, yes — by the way, I do remember — this is the spot where those home-guards caught me the time that I jumped out the window and tried to run away. But that shouldn't disturb Cherry. She didn't even see me when those men caught me. I wonder?" He tried hard to figure out the puzzle.

The days were busy ones and a month passed quickly in which a great deal of work was done about the old place. Fences were fixed, weeds were pulled out and the lawn and shrubs trimmed, seeds were planted and the old

home and garden soon began to look somewhat like itself again.

Cherry, Mrs. Parker, Sincy, Mandy and even old Mrs. Kaiser went to the fields to take their turns with the plowing and hoeing. They felt themselves indeed fortunate to have an ox, lent them by Mr. Noles, to do their plowing with. Much of their food consisted of wild poke, garlic, mustard and artichokes. Little corn or wheat was used for bread, as they needed every grain for seed. The cattle were all gone. Milk and meats were almost unknown.

Most of the families that had left the community as refugees had come back home by now. Some, though, had settled in other states and would never return again.

John Phillips had moved his family back from Tennessee into the Cove and was striving hard for a new start in life. Mary Roberts had found Mrs. Phillips while they were in Huntsville, Alabama, and had come back with the family to live.

* * *

One beautiful Sunday afternoon in the first part of June, Mrs. Parker had gone with Mrs. Kaiser to see if they could find some of her people to stay with her.

Cherry was at home, busy studying over the family album. Now and then a tear rolled down her cheek as she came across pictures of her father. She felt very lonely as she remembered how he had so willingly sacrificed himself for a lost cause.

She started in alarm and jumped up as a heavy step sounded at the top of the stairway. She didn't realize till then that everything about the place had been so quiet. It was Mark. He whistled as he descended the stairs.

"Oh, shucks!" Cherry said to herself as she recognized

who it was. She kept quiet, hoping he would go on out of the house and leave her alone for she was in no mood to listen to his love-making.

He, however, turned into the parlor where she was sitting and came over to her and stood beside her.

"Dear," he addressed Cherry, "I want to talk to you about something that is very important — to me — something that I have been wanting to talk to you about since we have been here. Will you permit me, Cherry?"

"Oh, Mark, will you please — don't start that again!" Cherry's lips quivered.

"But, Cherry, I love you so much! Won't you please, let me love you?" He laid his hand on her arm.

Cherry removed it quickly. "No, Mark — you do not have my consent," she told him firmly.

"Cherry, don't you remember?" he tried to argue.

"Remember what, Mark?"

"Dear, don't you remember the kiss you gave me when I was called away from you in Montgomery? I thought you loved me then." He looked at her reproachfully.

"I did, Mark, as a brother." She watched to see his reaction to her statement.

"As a brother!" Mark repeated. "Cherry, I love you as a sweetheart, with all my heart."

Cherry turned another page in the album. She came upon the picture of Jack Walker's family group. She closed it immediately, hoping that Mark had not noticed it, and laid the album aside. Turning to Mark, she said, "Mark, will you do something for me?"

"Anything," he assured her emphatically. "Cherry, you know I'd do anything for you. What is it you want?"

"Mark," she began, "I realize how indebted Mother and I are to you. We can never repay you for all you've

done — for your saving my life that day at the river, and the way you waited on me, but, Mark — I have a special favor I want to ask of you —"

"Yes, what is it, dear?" Mark interrupted her anxiously.

"That you go on to your home —" Cherry said and burst into tears at the finish of her statement.

"Why, Cherry — what do you mean?" Mark gasped in unbelief. "I am in love with you. You mean everything to me. If I can't get you, I might never find anyone to love." He was hurt deeply.

"Mark," Cherry told him, trying to regain her own composure, "I have wanted to tell you since the first day you came to our house, that I am in love with another."

Mark leaped up from his chair beside her. "You don't mean — Cherry! You can't mean it — that you are in love with that Tory, Chris Sheets?"

"No, Mark, I'm not," Cherry smiled at his erroneous guess about Chris Sheets.

"Yes, you are, too; it can't be anyone else," Mark changed to a tone of accusation. "Why, Cherry, you may never see that man again. He has gone to Washington."

Before Cherry could reply, Sincy ran into the house screaming as loud as she could, "Oh, Miss Cherry! Law, Miss Cherry!"

"My goodness, Sincy! What in the world is the matter with you? You frighten me as much as if the Yankees were coming!" Cherry chided the colored girl.

"Law, Law, Miss Cherry! Ize plum skead out'n ma wits!" the girl cried, jumping up and down on the floor, much too excited to tell the cause of her distress.

Cherry ran to the door to see what Sincy was so troubled about. Coming up the steps was a figure which sent

tingling thrills all over her being — it was Bill Walker, tall, strong and neatly dressed. Cherry dashed madly to meet him.

As Mark turned to see what could be the cause of the excitement, he heard Cherry exclaim, "Bill! Oh, darling! Darling!" Then all was quiet and he knew the two were locked in tender, passionate embrace.

As he walked heartbrokenly into the hall and started up the stairs, he saw a tall, thin, broad-shouldered young man holding Cherry in his arms. Mark could not resist the urge to stop and scrutinize for a moment the man who had won Cherry from him. Bill was tan and strong as an ox. His jet black hair fell in flowing waves about his head. Tears trickled from his dark blue eyes — tears which Mark knew must be tears of joy. Mark turned then, and proceeded up the stairs to his room. He knew that both the man and Cherry were oblivious to his presence. He began to pack his things preparatory to leaving without more delay. His cause was lost, he knew.

* * *

After a bit Cherry withdrew from Bill's embrace and he reluctantly relaxed his arms from about her.

"Oh, yonder comes Mamma, Bill. Let's go to meet her," Cherry said with a smile, as she saw her mother coming a good way down the road. The two walked arm in arm to the yard gate.

"Well, well, Bill Walker — God bless you!" Mrs. Parker cried as she took her daughter and Bill into her embrace. "Bill, you look so big and tall and fine. Where have you been?"

"I have spent my time behind the Yankee lines," Bill told them happily. "Mostly in Cincinnati and Louisville.

I'm so happy to be back again — and with you, Cherry, and you, Mrs. Parker."

They turned back to the house, and then Cherry bethought her of Mark and of her impoliteness to him.

"Bill," she said, "I want you to meet a very good friend of mother's and mine — he did a great deal for us while we were refugees in Montgomery. He saved my life, too, once, when I fell in the river."

"Indeed — I must thank him for saving my sweetheart and so doing us the greatest favor possible," said Bill in his deep baritone voice. "Who is he?"

"Mark McDowell. You'll like Mark," Cherry assured him.

Mark met them in the hallway as they came upon the porch.

"Mark, this is Bill Walker," Cherry said happily.

Mark forced a smile. "Howdy, Bill," he said, and they shook hands.

"I can stay only a little while," Bill said a short time later. "I am on my way to Fall City to see my dear Mamma and the little ones. I will be back though, real soon, and we'll have lots to talk about when I return, won't we, Cherry?"

"Yes, dear," she said, "but — why hurry away so soon? Couldn't you stay a bit longer?" Cherry looked sad.

"When I come back," Bill assured her, "we won't part again — for a long, long time. I am hoping to get Mom and the rest of the children to come back here with me, to the old home."

"Bless you, Bill," Mrs. Parker said, crying a little. "I hope they come back with you. They will be welcome as sunshine. This Brown Creek Bottom just hasn't been what

it should, since you folks left it. I've always said it would take the Walkers back here as our neighbors to make the settlement what it used to be."

"I'll be waiting for you — don't be long, Bill," Cherry told him as they said goodbye again a short while later.

* * *

After Bill had left, Mark returned to his room, but reappeared shortly with his satchel, ready to leave.

"Why, where are you going, Mark?" Cherry asked him wonderingly as she saw him coming down the stairs with his bag.

"Going home, Cherry," he said with a sad smile. "I have realized the last few minutes what it means for one who has been gone so long, to go back to his people. I just thought of Dad, too; he was in prison the last account I had of him. I must see if he has been freed."

Chapter XXV

UNION FOREVER

Mrs. Kaiser was over early to see Mrs. Parker on the following Wednesday morning.

"Good morning, Mrs. Parker," Mrs. Kaiser said on nearing the yard fence.

Mrs. Parker jumped, startled almost out of her wits. An expression of fear swept her face as she turned to see who it was. "Oh, it's you, Mrs. Kaiser," she exclaimed, relieved.

"Oh, excuse me. I didn't mean to scare you," Mrs. Kaiser apologized to her neighbor, who had been busy hoeing weeds from her yard.

"That is quite all right, Mrs. Kaiser. I hate it that I am so jumpy and nervous," said Mrs. Parker. "But I reckon we are all about the same way and have a right to be after what we have gone through with." Mrs. Parker sighed and leaned her hoe against the fence.

"The Lord bless us everyone," Mrs. Kaiser returned. "It's a thousand wonders we've any wits at all left, after all the suffering we've endured for the past four years. And there is no assurance yet of any safety with these Tories tramping through the settlement."

"I guess that I had just not expected you so soon," Mrs. Parker said, still pale and trembling. "You must have found your stay there by yourself too lonely."

"Lord have mercy!" responded Mrs. Kaiser. "It was

the sight of them tramps trapsing by my house every day that I was afraid of. They were just more than I could stand." She shuddered at the remembrance. "Why there have been one to two passing there every day this week. And when I remember the threats of that old boy of Jennie Brooks', that he's going to kill every person that had anything to do with the killing of his old Pa, I just can't stay there."

Mrs. Kaiser leaned over the yard fence close to Mrs. Parker, as though confiding a deep secret. "And let me tell you," she whispered, "there was a big, husky Tory that went by my place Monday morning with a big pack on his shoulder. He just kept looking toward me as he passed, till I ran into the house. I wanted to come over here then, but I was too scared!"

"Oh, pshaw, I know who that was," Mrs. Parker declared, easing her tension. She opened the yard gate for Mrs. Kaiser. "Come in," she invited.

"Only to your porch," Mrs. Kaiser accepted. "I must go back as soon as I can. I only wanted to see if you would allow Mark to come and stay with me a few days, till I could get over my fright."

"Why, that most likely was Mark McDowell you saw with the pack on his shoulder, Monday," said Mrs. Parker, smiling a little. "It's a wonder you didn't recognize him."

"You don't mean it! Where was he going?" Mrs. Kaiser asked.

"Mark left here late Sunday evening on his way home, and he just about slept in the woods between here and your house Sunday night and went on by your place Monday morning."

"Well," Mrs. Kaiser sighed, a bit relieved at the knowl-

edge that it had been only Mark. Yet she was sorry he had gone by her place without stopping. "You don't mean that Mark has left you and Cherry, do you?" she cried, surprised. "Why did he go? I thought he'd be staying on right here with you — and really, I had expected that soon he and Cherry would be announcing wedding plans, and that he'd take over the running of your big plantation."

"Really, I have never entertained such an idea at all, and I am sure that Cherry has never had such thoughts about it," Mrs. Parker replied, flushing a trifle.

"But they seemed to be so much to each other; Mark was so attentive to Cherry and you while he were in Montgomery. I hardly see why it should not turn out for the very best for all of you," Mrs. Kaiser complained.

"Of course we realize that we are both deeply indebted to Mark for his kindness and we know that Cherry even owes her life to Mark for the time he rescued her from drowning in the river. But she has never had any interest in anyone but Bill Walker, as far as romance and love go — and he returned Sunday afternoon, and Mark saw then that he didn't have a chance, and so he decided to leave these parts immediately."

"Bill Walker?" Mrs. Kaiser gasped in profound surprise. "Is that boy back here?"

"Yes," Mrs. Parker said, smiling at Mrs. Kaiser's surprise and dismay. "He came in while I was away with you Sunday afternoon. He only stayed a short while with us. He went on then to see his mamma and brothers and sisters — said he'd be back with them in a few days, and so — I am expecting them in most any time today most likely. Cherry and the Negroes are in the house now working like they were every one slaves, trying to get it tidied up a bit before they get here."

"Mrs. Parker!" Mrs. Kaiser replied in a half-chiding manner. There was a distinct provoked expression on her face. "Do you mean to tell me that you are going to allow that bunch of Jack Walkers' to come here — back here to your house? After the dissension — and the way old Jack and that old boy, Bill, tried to shoot your husband and mine? I don't see how you could ever stand to do it!"

"I beg to inform you, Mrs. Kaiser," Mrs. Parker spoke with a firm, slightly indignant tone, "but there has never in all my life been a feeling other than of the very kindest in my heart for Mrs. Walker or any of her family."

"You can't mean it!" Mrs. Kaiser cried in unbelief. "You certainly must have a much higher regard for our dead, dear husbands' memories — our men who gave their lives for our South than to say such things!"

"The kindness shown to me by that poor little woman when I lay sick with the typhoid fever a few years ago, and the goodness that she has always had in her heart, is enough to make me always grateful to her. Besides, she hasn't changed a bit in her attitude since I have known her. Nor did Jack Walker ever change either. He wanted to be a friend to my husband, and my husband wouldn't let him. I even saw him beg Mr. Parker to talk to him and Nathan wouldn't talk to him. It is the war that has torn our country asunder. And we are going to all of us have to do a lot of forgiving in order to have it united again."

"I guess you would even be glad at having that Tory for your son-in-law." There was a tone of contempt in the way Mrs. Kaiser said it.

"From the way they greeted each other when Bill stopped here Sunday afternoon, I rather expect it will not be so very long," admitted Mrs. Parker proudly.

"My heavens alive!" Mrs. Kaiser voiced her disgust with the thought. "Here we have been away from our homes and lost our dear companions on the account of just such people as they, and now you take them back into your home!"

"But Jack Walker's wife and family have never been out of my esteem, and I would have been glad to have had them with me all the time if I could," insisted Mrs. Parker.

"It is no wonder we lost the war with all the people we have here like Jack Walker and those who sympathize with them," Mrs. Kaiser declared bitterly.

"Surely, Mrs. Kaiser," said Mrs. Parker, "it is on such people that we must depend for the rebuilding of our country and our community."

"It would be more like them to be coming back here trying to kill innocent women for helping the Confederacy than it would be for them to rebuild our country," Mrs. Kaiser allowed.

"And we could scarcely blame them if we regard emnity in our hearts and carry a grudge against them," replied Mrs. Parker courteously but firmly. "I am sure that many of those with the Yankees will feel that they have just cause for retribution against those who have treated them and their families so cruelly during the war, but I feel confident that the actions of most of them will depend upon our attitude toward them."

"Goodness!" Mrs. Kaiser was startled as she looked at the shadow of the eaves on the porch floor. "I didn't realize that I had been here so long." The two had left the garden and gone to sit on the porch in the shade. "I intended to stay only a short while and here it is already noon. I just must be going." She picked up her big bon-

net and started off for home. As she reached the yard gate she saw a crowd coming a good way down the road. "That must be them yonder," she said, turning to Mrs. Parker.

"Two, four, six, seven — yes, that's them; Mrs. Walker and her six children," Mrs. Parker declared with satisfaction, coming to the yard gate to meet them.

Bill was walking manfully along beside his mamma. They were carrying their entire household possessions on their backs and in their arms.

Mrs. Parker pushed past Mrs. Kaiser, who had stopped just outside the yard gate, and ran to greet them.

"Oh, Lord forgive!" cried Mrs. Parker, as she clasped Mrs. Walker joyfully in her embrace. Streams of tears were flowing freely from their eyes. Mrs. Parker then turned to embrace each of the children tenderly.

Cherry and Sincy had seen them and came as fast as they could run. Mrs. Walker grabbed Cherry into her arms and held her for several minutes. Then while Cherry greeted the small children with a fervent hug, Mrs. Walker embraced Sincy affectionately.

Mrs. Kaiser still stood beside the gate, her mouth agape. Her eyes were fixed on Bill Walker — he was much of a man — tall, strong of body. There was little resemblance she could see to the Bill Walker she had known a few years before.

"Oh, Mrs. Kaiser!" Mrs. Walker cried as she recognized the widow, and ran to her and threw her arms about her.

And then Mrs. Kaiser repented. "Oh, Lord, I'm so happy!" she cried, and returned the embrace. "I am so glad I was here to see this and to share this joy and glad-

ness with you all. Really, I have seen more love displayed in this meeting than I have known for four long years."

Bill and Cherry began walking away together on toward the house.

"Won't you stay and visit with us," Mrs. Parker invited Mrs. Kaiser, as they turned back to the house.

"I will, gladly," accepted Mrs. Kaiser, wiping the tears from her eyes with the edge of her white apron. "I want to be a part of this happy reunion as long as I can. I want to help rebuild this community in Brown Creek Bottom. I fully realize now that the way to do it is by friendship and confidence in one another."

As the group entered the house, Zeke, Liz, Mandy and Stacia were lined up in the hallway to greet them.

"This is Jack's wife and children. They are back to live with us," Mrs. Parker told the Negroes. They all bowed low and broke into tears because of their joy on seeing the Walkers again. They were too overjoyed to say anything — it seemed like old times coming back.

"Um — Um!" moaned Stacia, wringing her hands in ecstasy.

"Rest a while, children, and then we will go on to our old home and see what we can do to prepare some means of lodging for the night," Mrs. Walker told the children clustered about her.

"Nonsense," chided Mrs. Parker. "You will do no such thing. You will stay here tonight and as long as you need to get beds and dishes and tables for your house."

Bill and Cherry were in the parlor across the hallway of the house, looking out the window toward the big pine tree beside the fence.

"Bill," Cherry said softly, "that's the place where they

caught you. Really, I never expected to see you alive again."

"And you had just promised me that you would be faithful, hadn't you, Cherry?"

"Forever —" Cherry had to choke the word from her mouth. "And, Bill, there has not been a day since I have been here, that I have not looked toward that spot beside the tree where they trampled you down — and renewed that vow." Her voice faded as she burst into tears.

Bill took her into his arms and turned her away from the window.

* * *

The next day Bill made his way to the Probate Judge's office in Houston.

"I'm Bill Walker, of Brown Creek Bottom. I want to get a license to marry Cherry Parker," he told the Judge.

The Judge smiled at him. "I'm Tom Gartman, appointed Judge after Tom Pink Curtis was butchered," he said gravely. "Would ye like to have a job in the Government, young man? You can have one if you want it."

"No, not at all," Bill replied emphatically. "I want no part in it. The only thing that I want is to get this license and then get old preacher, Green Haley to marry me to the best girl in Winston County, and then I want to spend the rest of my days in Brown Creek Community helping my mamma and the children at the old home place and helping Mrs. Parker run the big plantation."

"The fee will be four bits for the license," Gartman told him.

"You'll have to credit me till we can make something this fall. I'll be back then and pay you," Bill explained.

"Good enough, young man. Good enough," Gartman

chuckled and handed him the license he had just made out for him. They shook hands.

And a moment later Bill was on his way.

* * *

The following Sunday afternoon the whole populace of Brown Creek Bottom was gathered at the Parker plantation to witness the most prominent wedding that had been held there during the generation.

A solemn tenseness settled over the crowd as the preacher, Green Haley, walked from the hallway onto the porch, reading his open Bible:

"Nathan Parker would turn over in his grave, wherever he's at," Sam Noles said in an undertone to the man next to him, "if he knowed this was taking place."

"Yes, but this ain't the work uv man. This is the work uv God what makes sich a union as this," declared Andy Ingle in reply.

A sudden hush settled over the large audience as Bill and Cherry walked out and stopped in front of the preacher. The old man spoke.

"Dearly beloved," he said, "we've met here this beautiful Sunday afternoon to join in wedlock these two happy people, thus binding together the remnants of a broken community. And uniting in inseparable ties the spirits typical of the unity that should forever characterize the spirits and aims of this great country of ours. What, therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder —" he finished.

Thus were consummated the struggles and hardships which only love will endure, and two happy hearts were united — two happy hearts that had been inevitably destined for each other, and the breach was healed which, for years, had torn the people of that community asunder.

Chapter XXVI

THE SEQUEL

Since this is a true story, it will no doubt be of interest to many readers to know something of the conditions in this section and what became of some of the outstanding characters in years which followed.

Many of the characters cannot be accounted for, as in the case of fiction, where the author can dispose of them as he sees fit. Some of them died during the war.

This was the case of William Lowndes Yancey, who died of illness in his home near Montgomery, Alabama, July 28th, 1863.

Others of the political leaders continued on in the role of statesmen and leaders of the State. Many of those who experienced a part in the struggles between the home-guards and Tories left their homes during the war and were never heard of again. There were some, however, who remained on in their respective communities and regained the esteem and good will of their neighbors. At the same time, there were some who lived on in their old neighborhoods who were always held in duress and were never forgiven for their cruelties. Some there were who attained a ripeness in years and confessed of having lived every day and night since the war in constant fear of reprisals.

It is thought fitting to give here, a few examples of the effects of the war between the States on the people of this section.

Christopher C. Sheets was appointed and served as a member of the State Constitutional Convention in 1865. He was chosen as one of the Grant Electors in 1868. In 1869, he was appointed by Grant as United States Consul to Denmark. This position he held for three years. In 1872 he was chosen as a delegate to the Republican National Convention in Philadelphia, that selected Grant for the second term. The same year, he was elected as Congressman at large from the State of Alabama, by more than a ten thousand vote majority. After being defeated for the same office two years later, he was appointed auditor for the post office department and served from 1875–1877, when he resigned to become appraiser of merchandise for the Port of Mobile. The following year he was appointed Assistant Collector of Internal Revenue for the State of Alabama. This position he held until Grover Cleveland was inaugurated in 1885. Christopher Sheets was married to a Mrs. Mary Anderson, nee Dickson, an English woman, in 1887 and was not active again in public affairs.

Bill Looney continued on in Winston County and made many unsuccessful attempts to secure a Federal pension. This he failed in because he had never had any official connections with the Federal Army.

George Stout bought a large farm a few miles north of Stamford Prison and Mitchell Forte in Marion County. The Kelleys of the "Kelley's Cove," heard of this and set in to avenge the brutal death of the Kelley invalid. In the spring of 1866, they heard of Stout being in the county, but were unable to find him. They had heard that he owned the biggest yoke of oxen in all the country and with this as a lead they set out to find him. They went

about asking all they met about a big yoke of oxen for sale. Finally they were told of George Stout, who owned the biggest yoke in all the country; that he might be induced to sell. Steve Kelley went to his place under an assumed name and bargained with him for twice the worth of the oxen. When Stout finally agreed to sell, Steve Kelley left to get the money, promising to be back for the oxen the next day.

The next day the Kelleys swarmed and set out for Stout's place. The following morning they were waylaying his barn and when Stout went to feed his stock at daylight, thirty shots were fired from close range, sending huge slugs of lead into his head and body.

When this was reported in the community, several men took their guns and formed a posse to pursue the Kelleys. They had gone several miles in the direction of the "Kelley's Cove" without glimpsing the Kelley band.

Then, Andrew J. Mitchell, for whom the Mitchell Forte had been named, who had been thinking the matter over, spoke to the men. "Listen, men," he said, "Old George Stout had this coming to him for the way he killed that invalid boy. He did a lot of good things, but also some bad — he perhaps even deserved worse than he got. If we go on over there after them Kelleys, we, might be able to get some of them — but one thing is sure, some of us are sure to get killed. This blamed war is now over and we ought to forget it. You men can go on after the Kelleys if you want to, but I'm going back to my house and work my crop and tend to my own business." He turned and headed back the way they had come.

The others thought it over, and the posse petered out as they finally all turned and followed him back.

John R. Phillips had moved back to his home in the Cove and was getting a new start in life. In 1866, his wife, Mahala, died, leaving him with a family of small children. Shortly afterward, Phillips was married to Mary Roberts, who had been with the family for years. By this woman, Phillips reared a large family. The author has known many of these fine children and grandchildren.

Jim Brooks made good his vow that he would kill the six men who had killed his daddy. He killed Jeff Hagan in Winston County, Jim Smith in Fayette County, Bob South and Mike Gosa in Walker County, and Tuscaloosa County, and years later went to Texas, where he finally located Sherm Williams and killed him. The Brooks family became known as outlaws in trying to avenge the death of their daddy.

Joe Roberts had left the section during the raids by George Stout and his men. Years after the war, a family by the name of Whitehead moved to Smithville, Mississippi, where they lived neighbors to the Roberts family for years without knowing that it was Joe Roberts, the homeguard, and brother of Stoke Roberts, till on his death-bed, he confessed:

"Lord God," he said, "I'm doomed to hell! All that I have been able to see night or day for twenty years is that Henry Tucker that I helped to butcher!"

It is said that he expired in such anguish that the flames of Hell seemed to be tearing his soul from his body.

Twenty-five years after the war had ended, Jack, the son of Bill Walker and Cherry, had gone to the new courthouse at Double Springs on election day to vote. He was persuaded by Colonel Bonds, a Democratic candidate, to vote for him and the two were going up the courthouse

steps to the voting booth. Bonds was leading young Walker by the arm when they were met by Frank Curtis, an old man, who threw his finger in Walker's face as if it had been a gun and cried, his voice ringing with emotion: "Young man! Twenty-five years ago I went with the group to Jasper and helped to bust the jail-house door down and turn your daddy out of that stinking jail when he was to have been shot the next day. Now, here you are going in to vote for that motley crew that would have shot your daddy and thrown him into a ditch! Don't you do it! Don't you do it!"

Young Jack Walker stood for a couple of minutes like a statue with big drops of cold perspiration popping out on his brow. Then he turned and without a word walked away.

From that day until this, there have never been but few officers in Winston County who have been elected on the Democratic ticket. The people are still not resentful of the name "Tories." Instead, they are rather proud of their county, "The Free State of Winston."

THE END